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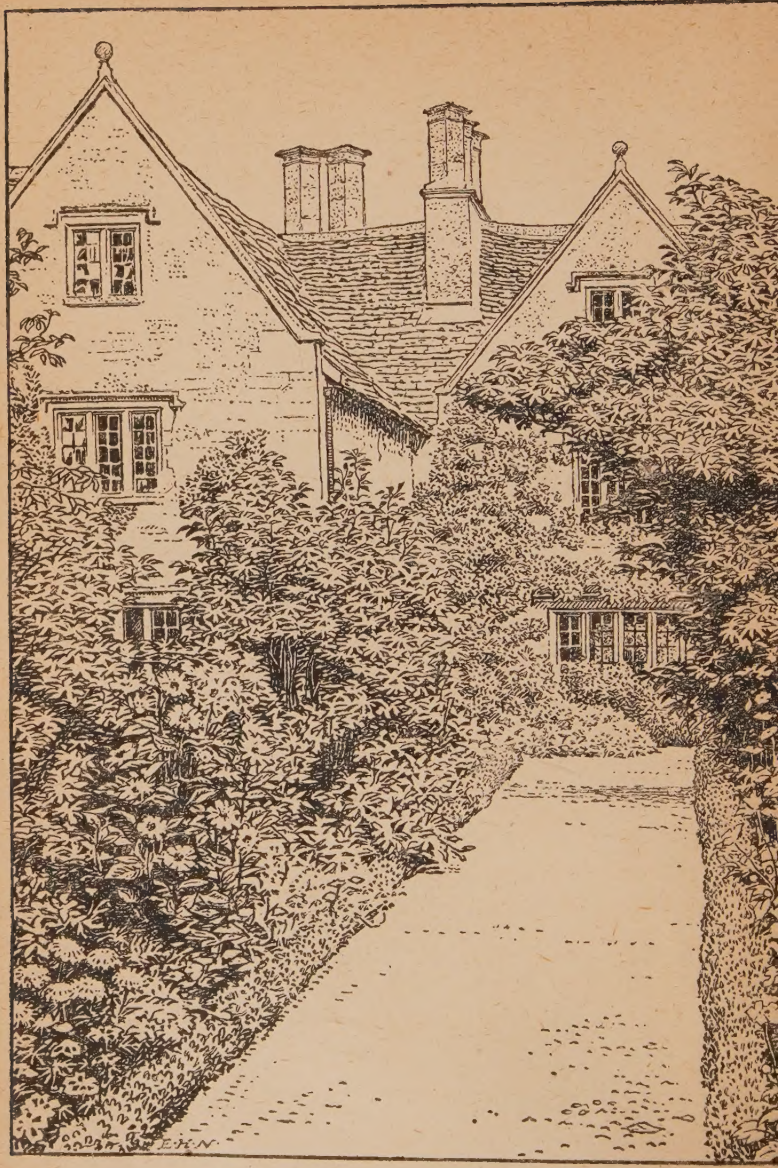

THE MANOR HOUSE, KELMSCOTT, FROM THE GARDEN

From a drawing by E. H. New

THE LIFE

OF

WILLIAM MORRIS

BY

J. W. MACKAIL

NEW IMPRESSION

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THIS biography was undertaken by me at the special request of Sir Edward Burne-Jones. I will not attempt to say how much it owes to his guidance and encouragement, nor how much it has lost by their removal.

When the task of writing the life of Morris was placed in my hands, his family and representatives gave me unreserved access to all the materials in their possession. To them, and more especially to his executors, Mr. F. S. Ellis and Mr. S. C. Cockerell, I owe my best thanks for their friendly help. I am further indebted to Mr. Ellis for the index at the end of the book.

Among the few survivors of Morris's earliest friends, I must express very special obligations to Mr. Cormell Price for generous and ungrudging assistance, and to the Rev. Canon R. W. Dixon. For information as to later years I am greatly indebted to Mr. Philip Webb, Mr. George Wardle, Mr. C. Fairfax Murray, Mr. William De Morgan, and Mr. Emery Walker, who were all long and closely associated with him both in work and in friendship. The partners of the

firm of Morris & Co., Messrs. Smith and Mr. J. H. Dearle, have given me access to the early books of the firm and much valuable information with regard to Morris's conduct of the business.

I would take this opportunity of thanking all those others who have communicated letters or other material to me in the course of the work. To Lady Burne-Jones, whose share in the help given me has not been less than that of any one I have named, this is not the place where I can fully express my gratitude.

6, Pembroke Gardens, Kensington,
24th March, 1899.

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THE MANOR HOUSE, KELMSCOTT, FROM THE GARDEN . . . . . *Frontispiece*

From a drawing by E. H. New.

Sed dico, Numquid non audierunt? Et quidem in omnem terram exivit sonus eorum et in fines orbis terræ verba eorum.

Hæc autem omnia in figura contingebant illis: scripta sunt autem ad correptionem nostram, in quos fines seculorum devenerunt.

THE LIFE OF WILLIAM MORRIS

CHAPTER I

WALTHAMSTOW, WOODFORD, AND MARLBOROUGH

1834-1852

POET, artist, manufacturer, and socialist, author of "The Earthly Paradise":—this terse unimpassioned entry in the "Fasti Britannici" sums up, in a form of words which he would himself have accepted as substantially accurate, the life and work of a remarkable man. What place he may finally occupy in the remembrance of the world, how long or how distinctly his unique personality may stand out above the smooth surface of oblivion under which, sooner or later, the greatest names are overwhelmed together with the least, it does not rest with his contemporaries to determine. But those who knew him unite in desiring that some record may descend of one who, in an age of transition and confusion, set a certain ideal before him and pursued it, through the many paths by which it led him, with undeviating constancy; the impulse of whose life had before his death wrought a silent revolution in those arts which he practised and trans-

figured; and the whole of whose extraordinary powers were devoted towards no less an object than the reconstitution of the civilized life of mankind.

William Morris, the eldest son and third child of William Morris and Emma Shelton, was born at Elm House, Clay Hill, Walthamstow, on the 24th of March, 1834. His ancestry was on neither side in any way remarkable, and family records in the undistinguished middle class, whether commercial or professional, to which both his parents belonged, are generally scanty in amount and do not go far back. Such facts as have been preserved may be briefly set down, without laying any stress on what is known or what is unknown in the history of the family.

The Morrises were originally of Welsh descent, and their native country was the valley of the upper Severn and its tributaries, where the mixture or antagonism of two races in a country of exceptional natural beauty has bred a stock of fine physical quality, but of no remarkable gift either of intellect or imagination. "The quietest places under the sun," so a local proverb describes that countryside; and so they have been and still are, ever since the Welsh Marches were reduced to outward peace. Morris's grandfather (the first of the family, it is said, who dropped the Welsh Ap from his surname) settled in business in Worcester in the latter part of last century, and throve there as a burgess, "a man excellent in every relation of life, and very religious." He married Elizabeth, daughter of Dr. Charles Stanley, a naval surgeon, who had retired from the service and was in practice at Nottingham. She is remembered and described by her grandchildren—she lived to the age of eighty-five—as a tall fine-looking woman. At

Worcester their second son, William Morris, was born on the 14th of June, 1797. About 1820, his father having then removed his business to London, he was entered as a clerk in the firm of Harris, Sanderson and Harris, discount brokers, of 32 Lombard Street. It was a newly-founded London house. The Harrises were Quakers, and between them and the Morrises there was some family connexion. When a little over thirty, William Morris became a partner in the firm, which was now known as Sanderson & Co., and some years afterwards removed its place of business to 83 King William Street. Bill and discount broking, then even more than now, was a class of business carried on by a comparatively limited number of persons, whose status and social consideration approached those of private bankers. Competition was not keen, and the members of established firms lived in ease and even opulence.

Mr. Morris married soon after his admission to partnership in the firm. His wife, who long outlived him, and died in her ninetieth year so recently as 1894, was the daughter of a Worcester neighbour, Joseph Shelton. The Sheltons were a family with some history. The line can be traced back directly to a Henry Shelton, mercer, of Birmingham, in the reign of Henry VII. The Sheltons were prosperous merchants and landed proprietors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and contributed a number of members to the Church and the Bar. John Shelton, Proctor of the Consistory Court of the diocese of Worcester, Mrs. Morris's grandfather, had a family in whom a taste for music was very strongly developed. Two of his sons became singing canons of Worcester Cathedral and Westminster Abbey; a third, Joseph, was equally devoted to the art, of which he became a

teacher in Worcester. The families of the Sheltons and Morrises, between whom there was some distant connexion by marriage, were intimate with one another, and the marriage of William Morris to Emma Shelton, Joseph Shelton's youngest daughter, was a natural arrangement. It was then still customary that one of the members of a City firm should live at their place of business. Mr. and Mrs. Morris when married set up house in Lombard Street, where the two eldest children, both daughters, were born in 1830 and 1832. The next year they ceased to live in the City, and took a house at Walthamstow, in the pleasant Essex country overlooking the Lea Valley and within a mile or so of Epping Forest. Like many of his neighbours in what was then a favourite residential neighbourhood for City men, Mr. Morris travelled daily to his business by the stage coach.

The modern outgrowth of London has nowhere had more devastating effects than in Walthamstow proper, where the rows of flimsily-built two-storied houses, in all the hideousness of yellow brick and blue slate, stretch in a squalid sheet over the Lea Valley. Clay Hill, a slight rising ground projecting into the flats from the higher Forest country, is now just on the edge of the brick and mortar wilderness. Looking northward from it, however, one sees the face of the country much as it was sixty years ago: a flattish heavily-timbered valley of the familiar Eastern County type, neither beautiful nor ugly, with the line of the Forest stretching along the horizon to the north-east, towards Chingford and High Beach. Elm House till quite recently remained unchanged; it was a plain roomy building of the early years of this century, the garden front facing south on to a large lawn surrounded by shrubberies and kitchen gardens, with a great mul-

berry tree leaning along the grass. Within the last twelve months the advancing tide of building has swept over it, and house and garden, like many others in the neighbourhood, have wholly disappeared.

William, the eldest son, was the first of the children born at Elm House. There were six younger children, four boys and two girls.

The Shelton stock was long-lived and of powerful physique. But the Morrises do not seem to have been a very robust family. Both Morris's father and grandfather died comparatively young; and he himself, though he afterwards developed unusual physical strength, was delicate in infancy and early childhood. He had to be kept alive, his mother used to say, by calves' feet jelly and beef tea. Perhaps it was on account of this delicacy that he learned to read unusually young. At four years old he was already deep in the Waverley novels; and he formed as a child, not only the love of reading, but the habit of reading with extraordinary swiftness, only equalled by the prodigious grasp of his memory. The knowledge of books came to him almost by instinct. "We never remember his learning regularly to read," his sisters say, "though he may have had a few lessons from our governess:" and he himself could not remember a time when he was unable to read.

Meanwhile the business of the bill-broking firm, and Mr. Morris's own private commercial undertakings, grew and prospered. He was now a wealthy man; and in 1840, when his eldest boy was six years old, the family left Elm House, and moved across the Forest to Woodford Hall, a large spacious mansion of Georgian date, standing in about fifty acres of park, on the high road from London to Epping. The park was only separated by a fence from the Forest itself;

and the estate included about a hundred acres of farm land, sloping down to the little river Roding. Behind lay the pathless glades and thickets of hornbeam and beech which still, in spite of all encroachments, and of the nearer and nearer approach of London, remain in all essentials a part of primæval England, little changed in the course of hundreds, perhaps thousands of years. From the Hall the course of the Thames might be traced winding through the marshes, with white and ruddy-brown sails moving among cornfields and pastures. The little brick Georgian church of Woodford (since enlarged and modernized), stood alongside of the Hall, which had a private doorway into the churchyard. On the roadside nearly opposite, on a green space now enclosed, were the pound and the stocks. "When we lived at Woodford," Morris wrote to his daughter half a century later, "there were stocks there on a little bit of wayside green in the middle of the village: beside them stood the cage, a small shanty some twelve feet square, and as it was built of brown brick roofed with blue slate, I suppose it had been quite recently in use, since its style was not earlier than the days of fat George. I remember I used to look at these two threats of law and order with considerable terror, and decidedly preferred to walk on the other side of the road; but I never heard of anybody being locked up in the cage or laid by the heels in the stocks."

The outgrowth of Eastern London had not then overflowed the line of low hills which shut off the Lea Valley. The picture which Morris draws, in "News from Nowhere," of this Essex country in the restored and recivilized England of a distant future, substantially represents the scene of his own boyhood. "Eastward and landward," he says in that description, "it

is all flat pasture, once marsh, except for a few gardens, and there are very few permanent dwellings there, scarcely anything but a few sheds and cots for the men who come to look after the great herds of cattle. What with the beasts and the men, and the scattered red-tiled roofs and the big hayricks, it does not make a bad holiday to get a quiet pony and ride about there on a sunny afternoon of autumn, and look over the river and the craft passing up and down, and on to Shooter's Hill and the Kentish uplands, and then turn round to the wide green sea of the Essex marshland, with the great domed line of the sky, and the sun shining down in one flood of peaceful light over the long distance."

The park abounded in wild birds and beasts from the neighbouring Forest. It was an ideal home for a boy with healthy outdoor tastes. There Morris, rambling with his brothers on foot or on Shetland ponies through the Forest, formed his intense love of nature and his keen eye for all sorts of woodland life. He never ceased to love Epping Forest, and to uphold the scenery of his native county as beautifully and characteristically English. The dense hornbeam thickets, which even in bright weather have something of solemnity and mystery in their deep shade, and which are hardly found elsewhere in England, reappear again and again in his poetry and his prose romances. Fifty years later, when the treatment of the Forest by the Conservators had been the subject of much public criticism, he went over the familiar ground and reported on the changes which had been made on it. "I was born and bred in its neighbourhood," he then wrote, "and when I was a boy and young man knew it yard by yard from Wanstead to the Theydons, and from Hale End to the Fairlop Oak. In those days it had

no worse foes than the gravel stealer and the rolling fence maker, and was always interesting and often very beautiful.

"The special character of it was derived from the fact that by far the greater part was a wood of hornbeams, a tree not common save in Essex and Herts. It was certainly the biggest hornbeam wood in these islands, and I suppose in the world. The said hornbeams were all pollards, being shrouded every four or six years, and were interspersed in many places with holly thickets. Nothing could be more interesting and romantic than the effect of the long poles of the hornbeams rising from the trunks and seen against the mass of the wood behind. It has a peculiar charm of its own not to be found in any other forest."

In this healthy country life he rapidly outgrew his early delicacy of constitution. The life indoors was equally happy. "When I was a little chap" was a phrase often in his mouth; and these allusions to childhood always implied the remembrance of perfect contentment. Among the little things that impressed themselves on his childish memory are mentioned "a picture of Abraham and Isaac worked in brown worsted," and Indian cabinets, and "a carved ivory junk with painted and gilded puppets in it in a glass case." "Naïf or gross ghost stories, read long ago in queer little penny garlands with woodcuts," long haunted his imagination; and as he grew bigger, he found and revelled in Lane's "Arabian Nights." Among the books of the house there was a copy of Gerard's "Herbal." In studying it as a naturalist, the boy's eyes were led to examine the beautiful drawings, many of which later gave suggestions for his own designs in the flower-work of his earlier wall-papers, and in the backgrounds of designs for glass and tapestry. He

continued an eager reader of novels. His eldest sister remembers how they used to read "The Old English Baron" together in the rabbit warren at Woodford, poring over the enthralling pages till both were wrought up to a state of mind that made them afraid to cross the park to reach home. By the time he was seven years old he had read all the Waverley novels, and many of Marryat's, besides others which were then in fashion. Reading can be acquired without regular teaching, but writing cannot; and he did not learn to write till much after the ordinary age. But his innate skill of hand made it easy of acquirement to him when he once took pains; and his handwriting became in later life one of remarkable beauty. The subsidiary art of spelling was always one in which he was liable to make curious lapses. "I remember," he once said, when speaking of his childhood, "being taught to spell and standing on a chair with my shoes off because I made so many mistakes." In later years several sheets of "The Life and Death of Jason" had to be cancelled and reprinted because of a mistake in the spelling of a perfectly common English word; a word indeed so common that the printer's reader had left it as it was in the manuscript, thinking that Morris's spelling must be an intentional peculiarity.

The life of an English country house, even of the second or third order of importance, still retained, sixty years since, much of the self-contained and self-sufficing system of the manor house of earlier times. A certain elaborateness of appliances was combined with what would now be thought a strange simplicity. At some points there were links with the habits of mediæval England. Woodford Hall brewed its own beer, and made its own butter, as much as a matter of course as it baked its own bread. Just as in the fourteenth

century, there was a meal at high prime, midway between breakfast and dinner, when the children had cake and cheese and a glass of small ale. Many of the old festivals were observed; Twelfth Night especially was one of the great days of the year, and the Masque of St. George was always then presented with considerable elaboration. Among Morris's toys curiously enough was a little suit of armour, in which he rode on his pony in the park. He and his brothers were keen anglers—this taste remained one of his strongest throughout his life—and took the usual boys' pleasure in shooting, not the regular game of seniors, but rabbits and small wild birds. The redwings and fieldfares which they shot on winter holidays they were allowed to roast for supper. It was one of his childish ambitions to shoot woodpigeons with a bow and arrow. Besides the range of the lawn and park the children had little gardens of their own. He writes in later life of "the beautiful hepatica which I used to love so when I was a quite little boy." "To this day," he once said, "when I smell a may-tree I think of going to bed by daylight;" and the strong sweet smell of balm always brought to his mind "very early days in the kitchen-garden at Woodford, and the large blue plums which grew on the wall beyond the sweet-herb patch." One who shared this outdoor life at Woodford with Morris told me, in a phrase of accurate simplicity, that as a boy he "knew the names of birds." There was, indeed, little that he ever saw of which he did not know the name.

The love of the Middle Ages was born in him. Any slight remnants of mediæval tradition in the daily life of Woodford did not go deep; and it was only some years later that the Oxford movement spread over England, and deepened or replaced the superficial

mediævalism brought into fashion by Scott. The religion of the family was of the normal type of a somewhat sterile Evangelicalism, which cursorily dismissed everything outside itself as Popery on the one hand or Dissent on the other. The children were not allowed to mix with dissenters with the single exception of Quakers. But the old Essex churches within reach of Woodford, and their monuments and brasses, were known by Morris at a very early age; and a visit which he made with his father to Canterbury when only eight years old left on his mind an ineffaceable impression of the glory of Gothic architecture. On the same holiday they saw the church of Minster in Thanet. It is characteristic of his extraordinary eye and even more extraordinary memory, that just fifty years later, never having seen the church in the interval, he described it in some detail from that recollection. No landscape, no building, that he had once seen did he ever forget, or ever confuse with another.

Nor were the splendid Essex country houses which survived from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries less known or loved by him than the Essex churches. "Well I remember as a boy," he wrote in his lecture on The Lesser Arts of Life, in 1882, "my first acquaintance with a room hung with faded greenery at Queen Elizabeth's Lodge by Chingford Hatch in Epping Forest (I wonder what has become of it now?), and the impression of romance that it made upon me! a feeling that always comes back on me when I read, as I often do, Sir Walter Scott's 'Antiquary,' and come to the description of the Green Room at Monkbarns, amongst which the novelist has with such exquisite cunning of art imbedded the fresh and glittering verses of the summer poet Chaucer: yes, that was more than upholstery, believe me."

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When Morris was nine years old, the casual ministrations of his sisters' governess gave place to a more regular education. He was sent to a "preparatory school for young gentlemen" in Walthamstow, kept by the Misses Arundale. This was a couple of miles off, and he rode over to it on his pony. A year or two later the Misses Arundale removed with their school to George Lane, Woodford, within a few hundred yards of Woodford Hall. He remained there first as a day scholar, and afterwards for some time as a boarder, until the death of his father in the autumn of 1847.

For a number of years before his death Mr. Morris had held a position of some consequence in the district, and was a well-known name in the City. In 1843 he obtained a grant of arms from the Herald's College: "Azure, a horse's head erased argent between three horse-shoes or, and for crest, on a wreath of the colours, a horse's head couped argent, charged with three horse-shoes in chevron sable." The boy of nine was already of an age to be keenly interested in heraldry; and whatever may have been the reasons which induced Garter and Clarenceux to assign these bearings, they became in his mind something deeply, if obscurely, associated with his life. He considered himself in some sense a tribesman of the White Horse. In the house which he built for himself afterwards the horse's head is pictured on tiles and glass painted by his own hand. To the White Horse of the Berkshire downs, which lies within a drive of his later home at Kelmscott, he made a regular yearly pilgrimage. "Not seldom I please myself," he wrote many years afterwards, "with trying to realize the face of mediæval England; the many chases and great woods, the stretches of common tillage and common pasture quite unenclosed; the rough husbandry of the tilled parts,

the unimproved breeds of cattle, sheep, and swine, especially the latter, so lank and long and lathy, looking so strange to us; the strings of packhorses along the bridle-roads, the scantiness of the wheel-roads, scarce any except those left by the Romans, and those made from monastery to monastery; the scarcity of bridges, and people using ferries instead, or fords where they could; the little towns well bechurched, often walled; the villages just where they are now (except for those that have nothing but the church left to tell of them), but better and more populous; their churches, some big and handsome, some small and curious, but all crowded with altars and furniture, and gay with pictures and ornament; the many religious houses, with their glorious architecture; the beautiful manor-houses, some of them castles once, and survivals from an earlier period; some new and elegant; some out of all proportion small for the importance of their lords. How strange it would be to us if we could be landed in fourteenth-century England; unless we saw the crest of some familiar hill, like that which yet bears upon it a symbol of an English tribe, and from which, looking down on the plain where Alfred was born, I once had many such ponderings." In Great Coxwell church, halfway between Kelmscott and the White Horse, are two fifteenth-century brasses of William Morys, "sūtyme fermer of Cokyswell," and Johane his wife—the former with a figure of a man in a short gown, with a pouch hanging at his girdle. The discovery of these monuments gave him extraordinary delight. In spite of his Welsh blood and of that vein of romantic melancholy in him which it is customary to regard as of Celtic origin, his sympathies were throughout with the Teutonic stocks. Among all the mythologies of Europe the Irish mythology

perhaps interested him least: for Welsh poetry he did not care deeply; and even the Arthurian legend never took the same hold on his mind, or meant as much to him, as the heroic cycle of the Teutonic race.

The very soil of his birth, "this unromantic, uneventful-looking land of England," he loved with a tempered but deep enthusiasm. "The land is a little land; too much shut up within the narrow seas, as it seems, to have much space for swelling into hugeness; there are no great wastes overwhelming in their dreariness, no great solitudes of forests, no terrible untrodden mountain-walls: all is measured, mingled, varied, gliding easily one thing into another: little rivers, little plains, swelling, speedily-changing uplands, all beset with handsome orderly trees; little hills, little mountains, netted over with the walls of sheepwalks: neither prison nor palace, but a decent home." And in that decent home there had dwelt until the coming of the evil days, "a people rustic and narrow-minded indeed, but serious, truthful, and of simple habits."

A little later, the wealth of the family became immensely increased by one of those chances which occur a few times in a generation, and give almost a touch of romance to the routine of commerce. In 1844 a company was formed to work certain veins of copper which had been discovered near Tavistock. It started on the modest capital of 1,024 shares of one pound each fully paid up. Of these Mr. Morris held 272; they had been assigned to him, it is said, in part payment of a debt. As soon as working was begun, the lodes were found to be of extraordinary richness. Copper then was worth a hundred and sixty pounds a ton: from this mine, famous under the name of the Devon Great Consols, it could be turned out for a trifling expense in apparently inexhaustible

quantities. Within six months the shares were changing hands in the market at eight hundred pounds each. Mr. Morris's holding rose for a while to the value of over two hundred thousand pounds. Three quarters of a million tons of copper ore were yielded by the mine before the gradual exhaustion of the lodes, and the fall in the price of copper, brought its prosperity to a close. It still leads a somewhat struggling existence on the proceeds of the arsenic which, in the high days of the copper-mining industry, was neglected as an unimportant by-product. But its earlier fortunes, and its gradual decline, were not without importance in determining the course of Morris's life.

Some time before his death Mr. Morris had bought a nomination to Marlborough College for his son. The school had been recently founded "in a healthy and central position," to quote the terms of its prospectus, "and conveniently accessible from all parts of England, being only twelve miles from Swindon, which is to be the great point of junction of the chief lines of railway in the kingdom." It was at all events in the centre of one of the most beautiful and romantic parts of England, in a neighbourhood full of history, and still fuller of prehistoric records. A childhood on the skirts of Epping Forest was fitly followed by a boyhood on the edge of Savernake. It is not easy to over-estimate the influence of these surroundings on the development of a sensitive and romantic nature, or their share in fostering that passionate love of earth and her beauty which remained a controlling and sustaining force throughout his life.

Morris was entered at Marlborough College in February, 1848, being then just under fourteen. He remained there till the Christmas of 1851, the last year of Dr. Wilkinson's rather disastrous head-master-

ship. During these early years the school had never outgrown the confusion amid which it started in 1843, when two hundred boys from all parts of England were suddenly shot down into the chaos of a new school with no tradition, little organization, and insufficient funds. Yet the need for the school was so great that these numbers kept growing term by term: within the first three years they doubled, and for some time afterwards there was an incessant race between the growth of the school and the progress of the new buildings. More than a hundred new boys entered along with Morris at the beginning of 1848. The Great Western Railway was then being pushed slowly westward from Reading. Until Morris left school, Hungerford, eleven miles off, remained the nearest station. The town itself was the same quiet little place that it is now. Its remoteness from any large town, and the weakness of the school organization generally, resulted in the boys being allowed much greater individual freedom than was even then common, or than now exists at any public school. There was no regular system of athletics. Cricket and football were only played by a small number of the boys. In play hours the bulk of them used to ramble about the country. There was no fixed school dress, and no prefect system. A single large schoolroom served for all the boys under the fifth form. For the average schoolboy the effects of this loose discipline may be doubtful; but for a boy of strong tastes and exceptional gifts it was not without its advantages. Under the elaborate machinery and the overpowering social code of the modern public school the type is fostered at the expense of the individual: with a boy like Morris the strain would have been so great that something must have snapped. Even as it was he

lived a rather solitary life; and he left Marlborough with little regret, and retained little affection for it in later years. But his physical and moral strength, both unusually great, saved him from serious bullying, and his school life was not unhappy. The self-sufficingness which always remained one of his most striking characteristics kept him from being either lonely or discontented. He never played either cricket or football. The weekly whole holiday of the summer half was spent by him in long rambles through Savernake Forest and over the Downs, sometimes in company with other boys of congenial tastes, but if not, quite happy to be alone. The pre-Celtic long barrows on the ridges above Pewsey Vale, the round barrows of which Silbury Hill is the most imposing example, the stone circles of Avebury, the Roman villas at Kennet, all became familiar to him; and the royal castle, as it existed in all its splendour in the reign of Henry III., was almost as real to him as the beautiful seventeenth-century building which had replaced it, and which, after so many vicissitudes, had become the home of the new school.

The school library at Marlborough was well provided with works on archæology and ecclesiastical architecture. Through these he ranged at will. His power of assimilation was prodigious; and he left Marlborough, he used to say afterwards, a good archæologist, and knowing most of what there was to be known about English Gothic. This interest in churches was reinforced by another influence which now came for the first time into his life, that of the Anglo-Catholic movement. The college, though not founded by any theological party, had a distinctly High Church character. Blore's chapel, now demolished to make room for a larger and statelier

building, was fast rising when Morris came to Marlborough, and a trained choir was formed when it was opened in the following autumn. The older church music appealed to him with a force only less than that of mediæval architecture. The romantic movement, which had originated a generation before, and had received so prodigious an impulse from Scott's novels, was now flooding into the channels of Anglo-Catholicism; and Morris left school a pronounced Anglo-Catholic.

A schoolfellow at Marlborough describes him as "a thick-set, strong-looking boy, with a high colour and black curly hair, good-natured and kind, but with a fearful temper." According to another, he took little or no part in the school games, but was a keen collector of birds' eggs. The restlessness of his fingers, which must always be handling something, was even then very noticeable. He used to seek relief from it in endless netting. With one end of the net fastened to a desk in the big schoolroom he would work at it for hours together, his fingers moving almost automatically. Mr. Fearon, the Secretary to the Charity Commissioners, who entered Marlborough in the same term, remembers him as fond of mooning and talking to himself, and considered a little mad by the other boys. On his walks he invented and poured forth endless stories, vaguely described as "about knights and fairies," in which one adventure rose out of another, and the tale flowed on from day to day over a whole term. The captain of his dormitory, who had a fancy for listening to stories, and exacted them night after night from the other boys, found him an inexhaustible source. His gusts of temper, as violent as they were brief, are what seem to have most impressed him on his contemporaries.

After Mr. Morris's death, Woodford Hall became too large and difficult an establishment for the family. In the autumn of 1848, during Morris's second half at Marlborough, they removed from it to another house, on the road from Woodford to Tottenham, and within half a mile of their old house on Clay Hill. The earliest extant scrap of Morris's writing is a letter to his sister Emma, dated Feast of All Saints (1st November) in this year, asking for details about the new house. "It is now only 7 weeks to the Holidays, there I go again!" the boy's letter ends, "Just like me! always harping on the Holidays I am sure you must think me a great fool to be always thinking about home but I really can't help it I don't think it is my fault for there are such a lot of things I want to do and say and see."

Water House, Walthamstow, the new house to which he returned for the Christmas holidays, and which remained the home of the family till 1856, was one of the same general type as Woodford Hall on a slightly smaller scale; a square, heavy Georgian building of yellow brick, with a certain stolid dignity of outer aspect, and spacious and handsome within. Its principal feature was a great square hall paved with marble flags, from which a broad square staircase, floored and wainscotted with Spanish chestnut, led up to a large upper hall or gallery. In one of the window seats there he used to spend whole days reading, both before and after he went to Oxford. Behind the house was a broad lawn, and beyond it the feature which gave the house its name, a moat of some forty feet in breadth, surrounding an island planted with a grove of aspens. The moat was stocked with pike and perch; there the boys fished, bathed, and boated in summer, and skated in winter. The island, rough and

thickly wooded, and fringed with a growth of hollies, hawthorns, and chestnuts, was a sort of fairy land for all the children, who almost lived on it.

In one of those prose romances which Morris, when he had just left college and was full of the romantic melancholy of two-and-twenty, contributed to the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, is a passage which shows how deeply the country in which these school vacations were spent had sunk into his heart and mingled with his dreams. "I was in the country soon," writes the hero of the story; "people called it an ugly country, I know, that spreading of the broad marsh lands round the river Lea; but I was so weary with my hard work that it seemed very lovely to me then; indeed, I think I should not have despised it at any time. I was always a lover of the sad lowland country. I walked on, my mind keeping up a strange balance between joy and sadness for some time, till gradually all the beauty of things seemed to be stealing into my heart, and making me very soft and womanish, so that at last, when I was now quite a long way off from the river Lea, and walking close by the side of another little river, a mere brook, all my heart was filled with sadness, and joy had no place there at all; all the songs of birds ringing through the hedges and about the willows; all the sweet colours of the sky, and the clouds that floated in the blue of it; of the tender fresh grass, and the sweet young shoots of flowering things, were very pensive to me, pleasantly so at first perhaps, but soon they were lying heavy on me, with all the rest of things created. I noticed every turn of the banks of the little brook, every ripple of its waters over the brown stones, every line of the broad-leaved water flowers; I went down towards the brook, and, stooping down, gathered a knot of lush marsh-marigolds; then,

kneeling on both knees, bent over the water with my arm stretched down to it, till both my hand and the yellow flowers were making the swift-running little stream bubble about them; and even as I did so, still stronger and stronger came the memories, till they came quite clear at last, those shapes and words of the past days. I rose from the water in haste, and getting on to the road again, walked along tremblingly, my head bent toward the earth, my wet hand and flowers marking the dust of it as I went."

In an unpublished story written fifteen years later, the description of his hero's boyhood has many passages in it which are unmistakably drawn from his own experience. The dreams which mingle with the healthy life of a boy, the first beginnings of thought, of sentiment, of romance, are touched in these passages from knowledge and vivid recollection. "You know," says the boy in the story, "one has fits of not caring for fishing and shooting a bit, and then I get through an enormous lot of reading; and then again one day one goes out and down to the river and looks at the eddies, and then suddenly one thinks of all that again; and then another day when one has one's rod in one's hand one looks up and down the field or sees the road winding along, and I can't help thinking of tales going on amongst it all, and long so for more and more books." The boy who cannot help thinking of tales going on amongst it all is undoubtedly Morris himself, and Morris as he remained all through his life. Even more strikingly autobiographic perhaps is another touch a little later in the same story: "Even though he half saw it he began to dream about it, as his way was about everything, to make it something different from what it was." This kind of dreaming, the instinct of making everything something different from what it

was, was indeed, alike for strength and weakness, of the very essence of his nature.

Another passage from the same story, of vivid and singular truth, might be an actual scene on a summer evening at Water House:

"John ran into the toolhouse and took up a garden fork preparatory to going off to the melon ground where the worm-populated old dung heaps were; for some strange reason that moment and the half hour were one of the unforgotten times of his life, and in after days he could never smell the mixed scent of a toolhouse, with its bast mats and earthy roots and herbs, in a hot summer evening, without that evening with every word spoken or gesture made coming up clear into his memory. It struck on him as he came out of the toolhouse again into the glow of the evening, and all his boyish visions of the great red-finned basking chub and shadowy flitting bleak, and the great water lily leaves spreading over the perch-holes, vanished and left him with that vague feeling of disappointment in life past yet hope of life to come . . . some reflex of the love and death going on throughout the world suddenly touching those who are ignorant as yet of the one and have not yet learned to believe in the other.

"He went off whistling from the gate, just as the low moon was yellowing through the windless summer night, in which the nightingales were beginning to sing now: one may easily imagine that his nervous sentimental mood had vanished before the gardener's talk . . . at any rate that thought was not uppermost in his mind as he startled the blackbirds out of their roosts in the thick leaves; nay, whatever there was of sordid about the story had slipped off him and left a pleasant feeling of life active and full of incident and

change going on about him, with I know not what of sweeter, of sweetest, lurking behind it all, and the little pleasures lying ready to his hand, they also were so keenly felt, so full of their own beauty."

Another schoolboy letter to his eldest sister, written when he had been a year at Marlborough, shows the threads of fresh interest that were beginning to mingle in his life.

"April 13th, 1849.

"My dearest Emma,

"I received your dear letter yesterday and I am glad you liked the anthem on Easter Tuesday, we here had the same anthem on Monday and Tuesday as on Sunday it was the three first verses of the 72nd Psalm, In Jewry is God known, his name is great in Israel. At Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling at Sion. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the sword, the shield, and the battle. I certainly thought it was very beautiful though I have never heard it in Cathedral and like you could not tell how they would sing it there; but a gentleman (one of the boy's fathers) said on the whole our choir sang better than at Salisbury Cathedral; anyhow I thought it very beautiful the first verse was sung by the whole the second began by one treble voice till at last the base took it up again gradually getting deeper and deeper then again the treble voice again and then again the base the third verse was sung entirely by base not very loud but with that kind of emphasis which you would think befitting to such a subject I almost think I liked it better than either of the other two the only fault in the anthem seemed to be to me that it was too short. On Monday I went to Silbury Hill which I think I have told you before is an artificial hill made by the Britons but first I went to a place called Abury where there is a

Druidical circle and a Roman entrenchment both which encircle the town originally it is supposed that the stones were in this shape first one large circle then a smaller one inside this and then one in the middle for an altar but a great many in fact most of the stones have been removed so I could [not] tell this. On Tuesday morning I was told of this so I thought I would go there again, I did and then I was able to understand how they had been fixed; I think the biggest stone I could see had about 16 feet out of the ground in height and about 10 feet thick and 12 feet broad the circle and entrenchment altogether is about half a mile; at Abury I also saw a very old church the tower was very pretty indeed it had four little spires on it of the decorated order, and there was a little Porch and inside the porch a beautiful Norman doorway loaded with mouldings the chancel was new and was paved with tesselated pavement this I saw through the Window for I did not know where the sexton's house was so of course I could not get the key, there was a pretty little Parsonage house close by the church. After we had done looking at the lions of Abury which took us about ½ an hour we went through a mud lane down one or two fields and last but not least through what they call here a water meadow up to our knees in water, now perhaps you do not know what a water meadow is as there are none of them in your part of the world, so for your edification I will tell you what a delectable affair a water meadow is to go through; in the first place you must fancy a field cut through with an infinity of small streams say about four feet wide each the people to whom the meadow belongs can turn these streams on and off when they like and at this time of the year they are on just before they put the fields up for mowing the grass being very long

you cannot see the water till you are in the water and floundering in it except you are above the field luckily the water had not been long when we went through it else we should have been up to our middles in mud, however perhaps now you can imagine a water meadow: after we had scrambled through this meadow we ascended Silbury Hill it is not very high but yet I should think it must have taken an immense long time to have got it together I brought away a little white snail shell as a memento of the place and have got it in my pocket book I came back at ½ past 5 the distance was altogether about 14 miles I had been out 3 hours ½ of course Monday and Tuesday were whole holidays. As [you] are going to send me the cheese perhaps you would let Sarah make to me a good large cake and I should also like some biscuits and will you also send me some paper and postage stamps also my silkworms eggs and if you could get it an Italian pen box for that big box is too big for school. I am very sorry I was not at home with you at Easter but of course that was not to be and it is no good either to you or to me to say any horrid stale arguments about being obliged to go to school for of course we know all about that. Give my best love dearest Emma to all,

"And believe me

"Your most affectionate brother

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

The quickness and precision of eye, the thoroughness which made him go back to Avebury next day to verify what he had learned after his first visit, the contempt for "horrid stale arguments," are all highly characteristic: hardly less so is the interest in church festivals and church music, in which his sister fully shared. They had both been touched by the wave of

religious revival. A year later Emma Morris married a young clergyman of pronounced High Church views, the Rev. Joseph Oldham, who had been curate at Walthamstow from 1845 to 1848. Mr. Oldham was at the time of the marriage curate of Downe in Kent, but very soon afterwards he was appointed to a living in Derbyshire, and William Morris was thus put quite out of reach of his favourite sister. He felt the separation keenly; the brother and sister had been closely intimate in all their thoughts and enthusiasms; and it was to some degree under her influence that the Church was settled on as his own destined profession.

With this career in view, Oxford would naturally succeed to Marlborough, and at Oxford the natural college for a Marlborough boy to go to was Exeter. There was a strong connexion between the West-country school and the West-country college; and several of the Marlborough masters were Exeter men. But Morris was not high up in school, and was more of an expert in silkworms' eggs and old churches than in exact scholarship, while the condition of the school in the last year of Dr. Wilkinson's rule had become deplorable, and culminated in an organized rebellion in November, 1851. It was accordingly arranged that he should leave school that Christmas, and read with a private tutor till he was thought fit to go up for matriculation. The tutor chosen, the Rev. F. B. Guy, afterwards Canon of St. Alban's, was a man of high attainment and character, whose influence over his pupil was great, and with whom in later years Morris kept up a cordial friendship. He was then assistant master of the Forest School at Walthamstow, to the head-mastership of which he succeeded a few years later, and took a few private pupils in his house

at Hoe Street. Morris was with him for nearly a year. Mr. Guy was a High Churchman of the best type, a friend and kindred spirit of Dean Church, and a man of wide sympathies and cultivated taste, with an unusually large knowledge of painting and architecture. When "The Life and Death of Jason" was published, he pleased himself by tracing its germs to the days in which they had read the "Medea" together. Under his tuition Morris developed into a very fair classical scholar.

A fellow-pupil, Mr. W. H. Bliss, recalls that time with many incidents of Morris's outdoor tastes, his intense love of nature, and his great bodily strength. In playing singlestick, of which he was very fond, his opponent had to be guarded against Morris s impetuous rushes by a table placed between the two com batants. There were frequent visits to Water House, where they chased the swans and dragged the moat for perch, with a net of Morris's own manufacture. Their walks or rides in the Forest were almost daily, and Morris used to go off there by himself when the other pupils went to take a day's amusement in London. The day of the Duke of Wellington's funeral was thus spent by him in a solitary ride to Waltham Abbey. He had refused, with some touch of his later Socialist feeling, to go to London to see the show. One habit he had even then formed which clung to him through life: that of tilting his chair back, getting his legs twisted round it, and suddenly straightening them out to the strain or collapse of the fabric. Many of his own Sussex chairs, not in his own house alone, bear to this day the marks of this trick of his.

At the beginning of June, 1852, Morris went up to Oxford, and passed the matriculation examination at Exeter. This was with the view of going into

residence after the Long Vacation. But the college was then so full that his entry had to be deferred till the Lent term of 1853. He returned to Mr. Guy's meanwhile, and read with him for six months more, going with him for the Long Vacation to Alphington, in Devonshire, and returning to Walthamstow for the remainder of the year. At the examination in the Hall of Exeter there had sat next him another boy who had come up for the same purpose from King Edward's Grammar School, Birmingham, and was destined to be his most intimate and lifelong friend, Edward Burne-Jones.

CHAPTER II

OXFORD

1853-1855

Between Oxford of the early fifties and Oxford of the present day there lies a gap which is imperfectly measured by the change, vast as that is, which forty-five years have brought over the whole of England. The home of lost causes and impossible loyalties was on the eve of startling revolutions; but it still clung to the past with obstinate tenacity, and prided itself on keeping behind the material and intellectual movement of the age. The long struggle which the University had carried on against the intrusion of a railway within ten miles of their sacred precinct typifies a contest which was being carried on, perhaps on neither side with a full understanding of the issues involved, in a much wider and more various field. The opening of the railway line between Oxford and Didcot in June, 1844, and the announcement by Lord John Russell's Government, in May, 1850, of the appointment of the University Commission, are the two great landmarks which separate the old Oxford, the stronghold or sleeping-place of a belated yet still living mediævalism, from the new Oxford, which, for good or bad, has

plunged into the modern movement and ranged itself alongside of the modern world.

The Oxford in which Morris and Burne-Jones began their residence at the end of January, 1853, was still in all its main aspect a mediæval city, and the name (in Morris's own beautiful words) roused, as it might have done at any time within the four centuries then ended, "a vision of grey-roofed houses and a long winding street, and the sound of many bells." The railway was there, but had not yet produced its far-reaching effects. From all other sides: down the plunging slope of Headington; along the seven-bridged Bath and Gloucester Road, where it trails through the marshes from the skirts of Cumnor; across the Yarnton meadows; over the low stone hills, with their grey villages, that enfold the valley of the Cherwell, one still approached it as travellers had done for hundreds of years, and saw its towers rise among masses of foliage straight out of the girdle of meadow or orchard. "On all sides except where it touched the railway," writes Sir Edward Burne-Jones, "the city came to an end abruptly as if a wall had been about it, and you came suddenly upon the meadows. There was little brick in the city; it was either grey with stone, or yellow with the wash of the pebble-cast in the poorer streets, where there were still many old houses with wood carving, and a little sculpture here and there." Instead of all the meshes of suburb, hideous in gaunt brickwork and blue slate, that now envelop three sides of Oxford, there were but two outlying portions. These still remain distinguishable among the environing changes: the little faubourgs of St. Clement's beyond Magdalen Bridge, and St. Thomas's beyond the bailey-gate of the Castle, each with its tiny High Street and its inconspicuous corpor-

ate life. A few streets of small houses had grown up round the Clarendon Press since its establishment in the remote meadows beyond Worcester. Children gathered violets on the Iffley Road within sight of Magdalen. Within the city the modern rage of building had barely begun. The colleges stood much as they had done since the great building epoch of last century, which enriched Oxford with the church of All Saints, the new buildings of Magdalen, and the façade of Queen's. The University Museum was projected, but not yet begun; beyond the grey garden walls of St. John's and Wadham all was unbroken country, and the large residential suburb and the immense pleasure ground that take their name from Fairfax's artillery parks were meadows and market gardens. The Taylorian Institute and Galleries in Beaumont Street, not then overshadowed by the sprawling bulk of the Randolph Hotel, were the only new buildings in Oxford of any importance. The common street architecture was still largely that of the fifteenth century.

Nor in its inner life did Oxford retain less of an old-world air, and of fashions and ideas that had lingered out of an earlier day. But the continuity of life and thought is measured by decades where that of buildings is by centuries; and the furthest tradition that survived in the colleges was that of the stagnant sterility of the eighteenth century. Routh, who had known Dr. Johnson, still retained the presidency of Magdalen, to which he had been elected before the French monarchy had been abolished by the Revolution. During the second half of his long headship the Oxford movement had come and gone. Reaching its climax about the year 1840, it had begun its decline after the secession of Newman in October, 1845, and

though it still continued a force of prodigious importance, other movements were ranging up alongside of it, and it was suffering the law of all mutable things. The very life and expansive force of the movement, which made Oxford a missionary centre for the whole country, had laid Oxford itself open to invasion by the outer world and by new ideas. Reform was everywhere in the air. A formidable Liberal reaction had set in, directed almost equally against the pretensions of the Anglo-Catholic school and the privileges of the old-established system. Congreve had founded a small but ardent school of Comtists at Wadham. Jowett had become the leading force at Balliol, and was thought certain of the reversion of the mastership. The younger fellows of Oriel were nearly all advanced Liberals. Oxford had at a thousand points become inextricably attached to the outer world. The railway mania of 1846, when gambling in shares became more exciting than theological controversy, is said to have completed the work begun by the shock of Newman's secession. Left to itself, Oxford would have slipped back into the lethargy out of which it had been so unwillingly awakened by the Tractarian movement. But it was too late. The ferment struck roots deep. The modern city, with its tramways and electric lighting, its whirlwind of building up and pulling down, its tragi-comedies of extension and modernization, is the realized effect of a vast and complex body of influences which were then seething under the surface. Still the Oxford of 1853 breathed from its towers the last enchantments of the Middle Ages; and still it offered to its most ardent disciples, who came to it as to some miraculous place, full of youthful enthusiasm, thirsting after knowledge and beauty, the stony welcome that Gibbon had found at Magdalen,

that Shelley had found at University, in the days of the ancient order.

The year which had elapsed since Morris left Marlborough had not only loosened his connexion, slight as that in any case was, with the society of his schoolfellows and the common routine through which the schoolboy passes into the undergraduate, but had matured his mind and widened his knowledge to a degree which represents the normal growth of many years in an ordinary mind. "I arrived at Oxford," says Gibbon in the Autobiography, "with a stock of erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a schoolboy would have been ashamed." Morris's book-knowledge, born of extraordinary swiftness in reading and an amazing memory, was almost as portentous and no doubt as incomplete. "Just as in after years, in the thick of his work," Sir Edward Burne-Jones says, "it was noticeable how he never seemed to be particularly busy, and how he had plenty of leisure for expeditions, for fishing, for amusement, if it amused him; he never seemed to read much, but always knew, and accurately; and he had a great instinct at all times for knowing what would not amuse him, and what not to read."

For such a self-centred nature, already accustomed to take its own views of things, the ordinary college life, the ordinary undergraduate society, had little attraction. The numbers of Exeter were then about one hundred and twenty, and the college buildings were over-full. Even when Morris and Burne-Jones were allowed to come up they had to go into lodgings for their first two terms. No undergraduate was then allowed to spend the night out of college in any

circumstances: and the over-crowding was met by making freshmen lodge out during the day, and sleep in the third room of sets belonging to seniors, on whom they were billeted for this purpose. This curious and cumbrous arrangement was of course equally distasteful to senior and freshman, and threw the latter still more on himself, if he had any tendency that way.

Notwithstanding its popularity and its increasing numbers, the internal condition of the college was far from satisfactory. "There was neither teaching nor discipline," is the sweeping verdict of a contemporary of Morris who afterwards rose to high academic distinction. The rector, Dr. Richards, was ill and non-resident. The only one of the fellows who was at all friendly or encouraging was Ridding, the present Bishop of Southwell, who had brought a more energetic tradition with him from Balliol. Morris's own tutor contented himself with seeing that he attended lectures on the prescribed books for the schools, and noted him in his pupil-book as "a rather rough and unpolished youth, who exhibited no special literary tastes or capacity, but had no difficulty in mastering the usual subjects of examination." It is proper to add that this vague supervision was then regarded as sufficient fulfilment of a college tutor's duty, and that his college tutor is the last person in the world to whom an undergraduate thinks of communicating his inner thoughts or his literary enthusiasms.

The undergraduates at Exeter were divided, more sharply than is now the case at any college, into two classes. On the one hand were the reading men, immersed in the details of classical scholarship or scholastic theology; the rest of the college rowed, hunted, ate and drank largely, and often sank at Oxford into

a coarseness of manners and morals distasteful and distressing in the highest degree to a boy whose instinctive delicacy and purity of mind were untouched by any of the flaws of youth. Of the average college lecture some notion may be formed from a letter written early in 1854 by one of Morris's intimate friends, who shared many of his tastes.

"As for lectures, I have long since ceased to hope that I should learn anything at them which I did not know before. Imagine yourself ushered into a large room comfortably provided with chairs and a large centre table. The men take their places round it, and the lecturer, looking up from his easy chair by the fireside, exclaims, 'Will you go on, Mr. ——?' The approved crib version is then faithfully given, and meanwhile most other men are getting, by heart or otherwise, Bohn's translation of the next piece. When No. 1 has concluded, the lecturer asks benignly, '*Dum* governs two moods, doesn't it?' 'Yes.' 'It governs the subjunctive sometimes, doesn't it?' 'Yes.' 'Is *qui* ever used with the subjunctive? It is, isn't it?' 'Yes.' 'Very well, *very well*, Mr. ——. Will you go on, Mr. ——?' 'Haven't read it.' 'Oh, never mind then; you go on, Mr. ——, will you?' and when the crib has been deposited in the hands of a neighbour, in order that any requisite emendations may be whispered into the man's ear, the lecture proceeds. At some awful blunder, up jumps the lecturer, and after a long yawning pause, mildly breaks forth, 'Well, yer know, I should *hardly* think you'd take it in that way, yer know. Mr. ——, will you just translate that passage?' (Another crib version is given.) '*Precisely* so, precisely so; quite right, quite right, Mr. ——.' And so we gradually limp through a page or two which none of the men has bestowed ten minutes upon, and

leave the room for another exhibition of crib-repetition."

The wit here is not untouched with malice; but the sketch shows the impression made by the routine of college lectures on a sensitive, enthusiastic boy who had come to Oxford full of hopes and longings, and prepared to find in it the realization of all his school dreams. The effect was such as Morris himself at all events never got over: to the end of his life the educational system and the intellectual life of modern Oxford were matters as to which he remained bitterly prejudiced, and the name of "Don" was used by him as a synonym for all that was narrow, ignorant, and pedantic.

Morris and Burne-Jones made each other's acquaintance within the first two or three days of their first term. At first sight each found in the other a kindred and complemental spirit. Within a week they were inseparable friends, with that complete and unreserved friendship which is the greatest of all the privileges that Oxford life has to bestow. "We went almost daily walks together," Sir Edward writes. "Gloomy disappointment and disillusion were settling down on me in this first term's experience of Oxford. The place was languid and indifferent; scarcely anything was left to shew that it had passed through such an excited time as ended with the secession of Newman. So we compared our thoughts together upon these things and went angry walks together in the afternoons and sat together in the evenings reading. From the first I knew how different he was from all the men I had ever met. He talked with vehemence, and sometimes with violence. I never knew him languid or tired. He was slight in figure in those days; his hair was dark brown and very thick, his nose straight, his

eyes hazel-coloured, his mouth exceedingly delicate and beautiful. Before many weeks were past in our first term there were but three or four men in the whole college whom we visited or spoke to. But at Pembroke there was a little Birmingham colony, and with them we consorted when we wanted more company than our own. In a corner of the old quadrangle there, on the ground floor, were the rooms of Faulkner, learned in mathematics and the physical sciences, not so learned in theology, since, in spite of great distinction and University scholarships, he was once plucked because he included Isaiah in the number of the twelve apostles. Dixon, an old schoolfellow of mine and the only poet in our school, had rooms at the top of the same staircase, and upon the opposite side of the quadrangle lived Fulford, our senior by about two years, a man then full of energy and enthusiasm. But our common room was invariably Faulkner's, where about nine of the evening Morris and I would often stroll down together, and settle once for all how all people should think."

It was among this Birmingham group, Fulford, Burne-Jones, Faulkner, and Dixon, together with Cormell Price and Harry Macdonald, who came up to Oxford from King Edward's School a little later, that Morris mainly spent his time: and it was they who, together with Godfrey Lushington of Balliol, and Vernon Lushington and Wilfred Heeley of Trinity College, Cambridge, joined him three years later in originating and carrying on the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine. The two Lushingtons were a few years senior to the rest of the group: the acquaintance with them was formed through Heeley, who was also a King Edward's School boy. He was a man of brilliant parts and amiable nature, whose career in India was

cut short by an early death. With this Birmingham group Morris, from his first term at Oxford, was much more closely intimate than with his old Marlborough acquaintance. Such of these last as were at Exeter were, with the exception of W. F. Adams, now Vicar of Little Faringdon, and for many years a neighbour of Morris at Kelmscott, in completely different sets; and for the others, the isolation of one college from another was too great for ordinary school acquaintance to be long kept up without some farther attachment of congenial tastes. Mr. Bliss, Morris's fellow-pupil at Walthamstow, tells me that he dined with him at Magdalen now and then, and that they used to play fives together at the racquet-courts. But this was almost a solitary exception to the self-centred isolation in which the small group habitually lived. Within the group, Fulford, from his two years' seniority, and his superabundant volubility and energy, at first took a position of some dominance. He was one of those minds which reach a precocious maturity and quickly exhaust themselves. He had left King Edward's School with an immense reputation among his schoolfellows, which his subsequent performances did little to justify. By the time he left Oxford his friends had already taken his measure, and sighed over an extinct brilliance. But in this circle of undergraduates, distracted among a thousand divergent interests of theology, social problems, art, literature, and history, his gneuine and exclusive devotion to pure literature powerfully helped to keep that interest prominent; and Morris's own first essays, both in prose and verse, though from the first moment he far outstripped his model, to some degree owed their origin to Fulford's influence.

Within, and yet above or apart from the rest of this

group, the two Exeter undergraduates lived in undivided intimacy and unremitting intellectual tension. In the Michaelmas term of 1853 they moved into rooms in college. Morris's rooms were in the little quadrangle affectionately known among Exeter men as Hell Quad, with windows overlooking the small but beautiful Fellows' garden, the immense chestnut tree that overspreads Brasenose Lane, and the grey masses of the Bodleian Library. There the long nights set in to crown the long days. On the first night of one of their terms in college, after Burne-Jones had arrived late from Birmingham, and had supper, "presently Morris came tumbling in," he wrote home next day, "and talked incessantly for the next seven hours or longer." The two read together omnivorously. At first it was chiefly in theology, ecclesiastical history, and ecclesiastical archæology. Morris early started the habit of reading aloud to Burne-Jones—he could not bear to be read aloud to himself—which continued throughout their lives. Among the works thus read through were Neale's "History of the Eastern Church," Milman's "Latin Christianity," great portions of the "Acta Sanctorum," and of the "Tracts for the Times," Gibbon, Sismondi, and masses of mediæval chronicles and ecclesiastical Latin poetry. Kenelm Digby's "Mores Catholici" was another book which both read independently; their admiration for it was a thing of which they felt a little ashamed, and which for a time they concealed from each other. Archdeacon Wilberforce's treatises on the Eucharist, Baptism, and the Incarnation, were deeply studied, and Morris was within a little of following Wilberforce's example when he joined the Roman communion in 1854. But alongside of this course of reading, which might be regarded as profes-

sional in young men destined for the Church, grew up more and more overpoweringly a wider interest in history, mythology, poetry, and art. Morris arrived at Oxford already familiar with Tennyson and with the two volumes then published of "Modern Painters." One of Burne-Jones's earliest recollections of his first term was of Morris reading aloud "The Lady of Shalott" in the curious half-chanting voice, with immense stress laid on the rhymes, which always remained his method of reading poetry, whether his own or that of others. Ruskin became for both of them a hero and a prophet, and his position was more than ever secured by the appearance of "The Stones of Venice" in 1853. The famous chapter "Of the Nature of Gothic," long afterwards lovingly reprinted by Morris as one of the earliest productions of the Kelmscott Press, was a new gospel and a fixed creed. Curiously enough, in the case of passionate Anglo-Catholics, Kingsley was read much more than Newman, and Carlyle's "Past and Present" stood alongside of "Modern Painters" as inspired and absolute truth. Before Morris had been a year at Oxford the acquiescence of unquestioning faith was being exchanged for a turmoil of new enthusiasms. Burne-Jones had come to Oxford already saturated with Shakespeare and Keats, and full of the fascination of the Celtic and Scandinavian mythologies. The Pembroke group, together with the rest of their college, which throughout the Anglo-Catholic revival had remained steadfast to the older Evangelicalism, stood apart from the Tractarian movement, and were full of enthusiasm for modern and secular literature. Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, in poetry; Carlyle, De Quincey, Thackeray, Dickens, in prose. Thorpe's "Northern Mythology," to which he was introduced by Burne-

Jones, opened to Morris a new world, which in later life became, perhaps, his deepest love, that of the great Scandinavian Epic. His other lifelong passion, that for the thirteenth century in all its works and ways, grew not only on the unremitting study of mediæval architecture, but on a rapid and prodigious assimilation of mediæval chronicles and romances. But the two books which afterwards stood with him high and apart beyond all others, Chaucer and Malory, were as yet unknown to him; nor, until it was first brought within their knowledge by the appearance, in 1854, of Ruskin's "Edinburgh Lectures," had either he or Burne-Jones heard of the name of Rossetti, or of the existence of that Pre-Raphaelite school from which they received, and to which they imparted, so profound an influence.

Before this, however, art was taking a place alongside of literature in Morris's daily life, under the combined influence of his delight in architecture, his natural dexterity of hand, and the companionship of Burne-Jones, whose drawings, then chiefly of a fantastic nature, had already made him a reputation among his schoolfellows at Birmingham. "There was not a boy in the school," one of them writes, "who did not possess at least one of 'Jones's devils.'" Merton Chapel, one of Morris's special haunts, had lately been renovated by Butterfield; and the beautiful painted roof had been executed by Hungerford Pollen, a former fellow of the college. The application of colour to architecture was then a startling novelty, and young architects were making it their business to learn painting. Morris's study of "The Builder" newspaper, which he took in regularly, alternated with the study of mediæval design and colouring in the painted manuscripts displayed in the

Bodleian. One of these, a splendid Apocalypse of the thirteenth century, became his ideal book. Forty years later he went to Oxford to spend a day in studying it, and looked over it with greater knowledge but unimpaired satisfaction. He was constantly drawing windows, arches, and gables in his books; and even in his letters of this time, where the pen had paused, there comes a half-unconscious scribble of floriated ornament. Burne-Jones had already found in drawing from nature a relief from the burden of theological perplexities, and spent whole days in Bagley Wood making minute and elaborate studies of flowers and foliage. Morris's rooms were full of rubbings which he had taken from mediæval brasses. But the great pictorial art of Italy and Flanders was as yet unknown to either. "Of painting," writes Sir Edward Burne-Jones, "we knew nothing. It was before the time when photographs made all the galleries of Europe accessible, and what would have been better a thousand times for us, the wall paintings of Italy. Indeed it would be difficult to make any one understand the dearth of things dear to us in which we lived; and matters that are now well known to cultivated people, and commonplaces in talk, were then impossible for us to know." Giotto, Angelico, Van Eyck, Dürer, names which a little later became of capital importance to Morris, were then wholly unknown to him. The reproductions of the Arundel Society were just beginning to be issued; but at present all that he knew of Pre-Raphaelite Italian art was from one or two pictures in the Taylorian Museum, and the rude woodcuts in Ruskin's Handbook to the Arena Chapel at Padua. Among the most immediately stimulating of the books which he and Burne-Jones fell in with at Oxford was a translation of Fouqué's "Sintram,"

prefixed to which was a woodcut copy of Dürer's engraving of the Knight and Death. Poorly executed as it was, this fired their imagination, and hours were spent in poring over it.

The romances of Fouqué, which supplied Morris with the germ of his own early tales, became known to him through another book which exercised an extraordinary fascination over the whole of the group, and in which much of the spiritual history of those years may be found prefigured, "The Heir of Redclyffe." In this book, more than in any other, may be traced the religious ideals and social enthusiasms which were stirring in the years between the decline of Tractarianism and the Crimean War. The young hero of the novel, with his overstrained conscientiousness, his chivalrous courtesy, his intense earnestness, his eagerness for all such social reforms as might be effected from above downwards, his high-strung notions of love, friendship, and honour, his premature gravity, his almost deliquescent piety, was adopted by them as a pattern for actual life: and more strongly perhaps by Morris than by the rest, from his own greater wealth and more aristocratic temper. Yet Canon Dixon, in mentioning this book as the first which seemed to him greatly to influence Morris, pronounces it, after nearly half a century's reflection and experience, as "unquestionably one of the finest books in the world."

The following reminiscences, contributed by Canon Dixon, of the early years of the "set" as they then called themselves, before this name was replaced by that of the "brotherhood," draw a vivid picture of the life lived among them.

"I matriculated at Pembroke College, Oxford, in June, 1851, and began residence in the October term following, leaving behind me in the Birmingham

School Edward Burne-Jones, Edwin Hatch, and Cormell Price.

"At Pembroke I found two Birmingham School men, whom I had known distantly at the school, Richard Whitehouse and William Fulford. As soon as I came up, Fulford called on me, after I had been solitary two or three days. I can still hear his step running up the stairs: and his greeting as he came in. He was a very little fellow, very strong and active, very clever, and immensely vivacious. We immediately fell upon poetry: and he read me a poem, 'In Youth I died,' which afterwards appeared in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine. He asked me to breakfast next morning: and at his rooms then I met another man of Birmingham, though not of Birmingham School, Charles Joseph Faulkner. We three became very intimate. Faulkner was rather younger than I, though he had been in residence at least one term when I first knew him. His rooms were on the same staircase as mine: his at the bottom on one side, mine at the top on the other, in the north-east corner of Pembroke old quad.

"Fulford this term and after became extremely intimate with me. He was at least a year beyond my standing: but I could not find that he had any intimates before I came. He seemed to have had no set. However, he, Faulkner, and I soon made up a small set, and were constantly together. Fulford had great critical insight, and extraordinary power of conversation. His literary principles were early fixed. He was absolutely devoured with admiration for Tennyson. Shakespeare he knew, and could speak of as few could. Keats the same. (I introduced Keats to him: he had never heard of him before.) Shelley the same. He never changed much from the first three of these.

"Faulkner was, of course, wholly different . a great mathematician, who carried everything in Oxford. I suppose he must have had an original mind in mathematics, though he never made a noted discovery. He was not particularly of literary taste, I think, except so far as it must belong to a powerful mind.

"Next term, I think it was, Burne-Jones came up to Exeter: and William Morris was a freshman of the same term and college. Calling on Burne-Jones, we all became directly acquainted with Morris; and in no long time, composed one set. Jones and Morris were both meant for Holy Orders: and the same may be said of the rest of us, except Faulkner: but this could not be called the bond of alliance. The bond was poetry and indefinite artistic and literary aspiration: but not of a selfish character, or rather, not of a self-seeking character. We all had the notion of doing great things for man: in our own way, however: according to our own will and bent.

"At first Morris was regarded by the Pembroke men simply as a very pleasant boy (the least of us was senior by a term to him) who was fond of talking, which he did in a husky shout, and fond of going down the river with Faulkner, who was a good boating man. He was very fond of sailing a boat. He was also extremely fond of singlestick, and a good fencer. In no long time, however, the great characters of his nature began to impress us. His fire and impetuosity, great bodily strength, and high temper were soon manifested: and were sometimes astonishing. As, *e.g.*, his habit of beating his own head, dealing himself vigorous blows, to take it out of himself. I think it was he who brought in singlestick. I remember him offering to 'teach the cuts and guards.' But his mental qualities, his intellect, also began to be perceived and acknow-

ledged. I remember Faulkner remarking to me, 'How Morris seems to know things, doesn't he?' And then it struck me that it was so. I observed how decisive he was: how accurate, without any effort or formality: what an extraordinary power of observation lay at the base of many of his casual or incidental remarks, and how many things he knew that were quite out of our way; as, *e.g.*, architecture. One of the first things he ever said to me was to ask me to go with him to look at Merton tower.

"At this time Fulford had a sort of leadership among us. This was partly due to his seniority: partly to his intense vivacity: partly to his Tennysonianism, in which we shared with greater moderation, and in different ways. It is difficult to the present generation to understand the Tennysonian enthusiasm which then prevailed both in Oxford and the world. All reading men were Tennysonians: all sets of reading men talked poetry. Poetry was the thing: and it was felt with justice that this was due to Tennyson. Tennyson had invented a new poetry, a new poetic English: his use of words was new, and every piece that he wrote was a conquest of a new region. This lasted till 'Maud,' in 1855; which was his last poem that mattered. I am told that in this generation no University man cares for poetry. This is almost inconceivable to one who remembers Tennyson's reign and his reception in the Sheldonian in '55. There was the general conviction that Tennyson was the greatest poet of the century: some held him the greatest of all poets, or at least of all modern poets. In my time at Oxford there were two other men who, without touching him, obtained an immense momentary vogue, which has never been equalled since, perhaps, unless by Swinburne, or by Morris himself. These were

Alexander Smith, whose 'Life Drama' was in every one's hands, and caused an immense sensation; and Owen Meredith (Lytton), in the 'Clytemnestra' volume containing 'The Earl's Return.' Morris was delighted with this, especially with the incident of the Earl draining a flagon of wine, and then flinging it at the head of him that brought it.

"Now Fulford was absorbed in Tennyson. He had a very fine deep voice, and was a splendid reader of poetry. I have listened entranced to his reading of 'In Memoriam.' He read Milton even better: I suppose because there was more to read. His reading of 'Paradise Lost,' Book I., I shall never forget. He had a fine metrical ear, which helped it. No one can tell how Milton lends himself to a good reader. He was also writing much at this time, and would often read his pieces to us. No doubt many of them had a Tennysonian ring, but they were not mere imitation, they were too sincere for that. I should like to add here, as my friend is dead, and in his life never gained fame or profit from literature, that Fulford's influence was for good. He loved moral beauty first of all things, and would not have it put second in poetry or art.

"I have said that we accepted Tennyson in our own ways. The attitude of Morris I should describe as defiant admiration. This was apparent from the first. He perceived Tennyson's limitations, as I think, in a remarkable manner for a man of twenty or so. He said once, 'Tennyson's Sir Galahad is rather a mild youth.' Of 'Locksley Hall' he said, apostrophising the hero, 'My dear fellow, if you are going to make that row, get out of the room, that's all.' Thus he perceived a certain rowdy, or bullying, element that runs through much of Tennyson's work: runs through

'The Princess,' 'Lady Clara Vere,' or 'Amphion.' On the other hand, he understood Tennyson's greatness in a manner that we, who were mostly absorbed by the language, could not share. He understood it as if the poems represented substantial things that were to be considered out of the poems as well as in them. Of the worlds that Tennyson opened in his fragments, he selected one, as I think the finest and most epical, for special admiration, namely, 'Oriana.' He offered the suggestion, and with great force, that the scenery of that matchless 'ballad' is not of Western Europe, but South Russian, or Crimean. He held that 'the Norland whirlwinds' shewed this: and he had other reasons. It was this substantial view of value that afterwards led him to admire ballads, real ballads, so highly. As to Tennyson, I would add that we all had the feeling that after him no farther development was possible: that we were at the end of all things in poetry. In this fallacy Morris shared.

"I spoke of a leadership by Fulford. In reality, neither he nor any one else in the world could lead Morris or Burne-Jones.

"At this time, Morris was an aristocrat, and a High Churchman. His manners and tastes and sympathies were all aristocratic. His countenance was beautiful in features and expression, particularly in the expression of purity. Occasionally it had a melancholy look. He had a finely cut mouth, the short upper lip adding greatly to the purity of expression. I have a vivid recollection of the splendid beauty of his presence at this time.

"It was when the Exeter men, Burne-Jones and he, got at Ruskin, that strong direction was given to a true vocation—'The Seven Lamps,' 'Modern Painters,' and 'The Stones of Venice.' It was some little time

before I and others could enter into this: but we soon saw the greatness and importance of it. Morris would often read Ruskin aloud. He had a mighty singing voice, and chanted rather than read those weltering oceans of eloquence as they have never been given before or since, it is most certain. The description of the Slave Ship, or of Turner's skies, with the burden, 'Has Claude given this?' were declaimed by him in a manner that made them seem as if they had been written for no end but that he should hurl them in thunder on the head of the base criminal who had never seen what Turner saw in the sky.

"About this time, 1854-5, we started weekly Shakespearean readings in one another's rooms. Fulford, Burne-Jones, and Morris were all fine readers: so was Crom Price, who had come up three or four terms after us, to Brasenose. We used to draw lots for the parts. I remember Morris's Macbeth, and his Touchstone particularly; but most of all his Claudio, in the scene with Isabel. He suddenly raised his voice to a loud and horrified cry at the word 'Isabel,' and declaimed the awful following speech, 'Aye, but to die, and go we know not where,' in the same pitch. I never heard anything more overpowering. As an incident not in Shakespeare, I may mention that in the reading of 'Troilus and Cressida,' when Thersites ends his catalogue of fools with the remark, 'And Patroclus is a fool positive,' and Patroclus asks, 'Why am I a fool?' Morris exclaimed, with intense delight, 'Patroclus wants to know why he is a fool!'

"Among those of the set who took part in these readings I would mention two other Birmingham School and Pembroke men; the Rev. James Merrick Guest, still happily surviving in retirement near the School which has been the scene of his life; and the late

deeply lamented Dr. Hatch, the theologian, whose noble spirit was not fully known among us."

Morris's first Long Vacation, that of 1853, was spent in England, largely in going about visiting churches. It included a short visit from Burne-Jones at Walthamstow: it is characteristic of Morris himself and of the terms on which undergraduates live, in a world almost wholly of their own, that Burne-Jones up till then had no idea whether Morris was rich or poor, and whether he lived in a little house or a big one. In the Long Vacation of 1854 he made his first journey abroad, to Belgium and Northern France. This journey was one of profound interest: it introduced him to the painting of Van Eyck and Memling, who remained to him ever after absolute and unapproached masters of painting, and to what he considered the noblest works of human invention, the churches of Amiens, Beauvais, and Chartres. From this Long Vacation also he brought back to Oxford photographs of Albert Dürer's engravings, and an increased hatred of the classicists and (for their sake) of the classics. In Paris the Musée Cluny and the galleries of the Louvre enriched his knowledge of mediæval art in its noblest forms. At Rouen his desires were satisfied to the full.

"Less than forty years ago," he writes in one of the frankly and beautifully autobiographic passages of "The Aims of Art," "I first saw the city of Rouen, then still in its outward aspect a piece of the Middle Ages: no words can tell you how its mingled beauty, history, and romance took hold on me; I can only say that, looking back on my past life, I find it was the greatest pleasure I have ever had: and now it is a pleasure which no one can ever have again: it is lost to the world for ever. At that time I was an undergraduate of Oxford. Though not so astounding, so

romantic, or at first sight so mediæval as the Norman city, Oxford in those days still kept a great deal of its earlier loveliness: and the memory of its grey streets as they then were has been an abiding influence and pleasure in my life, and would be greater still if I could only forget what they are now—a matter of far more importance than the so-called learning of the place could have been to me in any case, but which, as it was, no one tried to teach me, and I did not try to learn."

As deep a love, and one that to the end of his life kept all its first freshness and passion, he felt for the common country of Northern France, the soil out of which sprang those radiant cities and glorious churches. The very smell "of beeswax, wood-smoke, and onions" that greets a traveller on landing, gave intense pleasure to his senses; and more than his own Essex lowlands, more than the "glittering Kentish fields" or the long rolling ridges of the Wiltshire downs, he loved "the French poplar meadows and the little villages and the waters about the Somme, and the long roads among them I longed to be following up more than I can tell."

The year which followed was one of even increased moral and imaginative tension, and launched him on the paths which he followed throughout his life. In March he came of age, and came into the uncontrolled disposition of something like £900 a year. This control over great wealth—for such it was for the Oxford circle in which he moved and to his own simple habits—brought with it at once an increased sense of anxious responsibility and a greater boldness in choosing his own course and following it. The Crimean War was in progress, and the awakening effect it had on English public life—eloquently attested by Tennyson's

"Maud," by Kingsley's "Two Years Ago," and by the whole general tendency for years afterwards of English poetry and fiction—made the younger generation feel all the excitement of a new era beginning. Socialism in a hundred forms—monastic, or industrial, or aristocratic—was in the air. The aspirations of "The Heir of Redclyffe," which two years before had been so vague and elusory, took definite shape in schemes of elaborate self-culture and social regeneration. The terrible cholera autumn of 1854 seemed the climax of a period of physical and moral stagnation from which the world was awaking to something like a new birth.

"Till late that night I ministered to the sick in that hospital; but when I went away, I walked down to the sea, and paced there to and fro over the hard sand: and the moon showed bloody with the hot mist, which the sea would not take on its bosom, though the dull east wind blew it onward continually. I walked there pondering till a noise from over the sea made me turn and look that way; what was that coming over the sea? Laus Deo! the WEST WIND: Hurrah! I feel the joy I felt then over again now, in all its intensity. How came it over the sea? first far out to sea, so that it was only just visible under the red-gleaming moonlight, far out to sea, while the mists above grew troubled, and wavered, a long level bar of white; it grew nearer quickly, it rushed on toward me fearfully fast, it gathered form, strange, misty, intricate form—the ravelled foam of the green sea; then oh! hurrah! I was wrapped in it,—the cold salt spray—drenched with it, blinded by it, and when I could see again, I saw the great green waves rising, nodding and breaking, all coming on together; and over them from wave to wave leaped the joyous WEST WIND:

and the mist and the plague clouds were sweeping back eastward in wild swirls; and right away were they swept at last, till they brooded over the face of the dismal stagnant meres, many miles away from our fair city."

So Morris wrote, with some vague but hardly concealed second meaning, in the first of the series of prose romances which were the outcome of this year. It was the discovery, sudden and seemingly unlooked for, of creative power in himself, a natural outlet in words for all his inward thoughts, loves, aspirations, which lifted the cloud away.

That winter Morris and Burne-Jones had moved to new sets of rooms, next to one another, in the Old Buildings of Exeter, then overlooking Broad Street across a little open space with trees, and not long afterwards pulled down and replaced by the dreary modern front towards Broad Street, which opened the disastrous era of rebuilding among the Oxford colleges. "They were tumbly old buildings," Sir Edward Burne-Jones says, "gable-roofed and pebble-dashed. Little dark passages led from the staircase to the sitting rooms, a couple of steps to go down, a pace or two, and then three steps to go up: your face was banged by the door, and then inside the room a couple of steps up to a seat in the window, and a couple of steps down into the bedroom. Here one morning, just after breakfast, he brought me in the first poem he ever made. After that, no week went by without some poem." The story may be continued in Canon Dixon's words.

"One night," he writes, "Crom Price and I went to Exeter, and found him with Burne-Jones. As soon as we entered the room, Burne-Jones exclaimed wildly, 'He's a big poet.' 'Who is?' asked we. 'Why,

Topsy'—the name which he had given him." This name, given from his mass of dark curly hair, and generally unkempt appearance, stuck to Morris among the circle of his intimate friends all his life. It was frequently shortened into "Top."

"We sat down," Canon Dixon continues, "and heard Morris read his first poem, the first that he had ever written in his life. It was called 'The Willow and the Red Cliff.' As he read it, I felt that it was something the like of which had never been heard before. It was a thing entirely new: founded on nothing previous: perfectly original, whatever its value, and sounding truly striking and beautiful, extremely decisive and powerful in execution. It must be remembered particularly that it was the first piece of verse that he had ever written: there was no novitiate: and not a trace of influence; and then it will be acknowledged that this was an unprecedented thing. He reached his perfection at once; nothing could have been altered in 'The Willow and the Red Cliff'; and in my judgment, he can scarcely be said to have much exceeded it afterwards in anything that he did. I cannot recollect what took place afterwards, but I expressed my admiration in some way, as we all did; and I remember his remark, 'Well, if this is poetry, it is very easy to write.' From that time onward, for a term or two, he came to my rooms almost every day with a new poem."

This first poem, which produced so profound an impression on its hearers, never went beyond the circle of its earliest audience. Morris destroyed his own manuscript of it in a general massacre which he made, soon after the publication of "The Defence of Guenevere," of the early poems which he did not choose to be included in that volume. "It was a dreadful mis-

take to destroy them," Canon Dixon says. "But he had no notion whatever of correcting a poem, and very little power to do so." This incapacity or impatience of correction remained characteristic of Morris as a literary artist. The manuscripts of his longer poems show little alteration from the first drafts. When he was dissatisfied with a poem, he wrote it afresh, or wrote another instead of it. The Prologue to "The Earthly Paradise," "The Story of the Wanderers," was originally written, and still exists, in a four-lined stanza. Something in the detail or proportion of the narrative dissatisfied him, and instead of remodelling the poem he deliberately wrote the whole tale anew in couplets, so as not to be fettered by the earlier version.

The loss of the poems thus committed to the flames in 1858 is one never wholly to be replaced. Like the poems in "The Defence of Guenevere," and in some cases even more strongly, they appear to have had that evanescent and intangible grace of a new beginning in art, the keen scent and frail beauty of the first blossoms of spring, which is more moving and more penetrating than even the full flower of a mature summer. Such, in their time, had been the troubled and piercing charm of the Virgilian Eclogues, of the early Florentine or Sienese paintings, of Tennyson's marvellous volumes of 1830 and 1832. Since the "old Butcher's Book torn up in Spedding's rooms in 1842 when the Press went to work with, I think, the last of old Alfred's best," so long and so vainly lamented by FitzGerald, there has perhaps not been a loss more to be deplored. One fragment is preserved by a precious chance in a letter written from home to Cormell Price, the youngest and the best-beloved among the brotherhood, in the Easter Vacation of 1855.

"Clay Street,
"Walthamstow, Essex.
"Tuesday in Holy Week.

"My dearest Crom,

"Yes, it's quite true, I ought to be ashamed of myself, I am ashamed of myself: I won't make any excuses: please forgive me. As the train went away from the station, I saw you standing in your scholar's gown, and looking for me. If I hadn't been on the other side, I think I should have got out of the window to say good-bye again . . . Ted will shew something to criticize, or stop, I may as well write it for you myself; it is exceedingly seedy. Here it is.

'Twas in Church on Palm Sunday,
Listening what the priest did say
Of the kiss that did betray,

That the thought did come to me,
How the olives used to be
Growing in Gethsemane.

That the thoughts upon me came
Of the lantern's steady flame,
Of the softly whispered name.

Of how kiss and words did sound
While the olives stood around,
While the robe lay on the ground.

Then the words the Lord did speak
And that kiss in Holy Week
Dreams of many a kiss did make:

Lover's kiss beneath the moon,
With it sorrow cometh soon:
Juliet's within the tomb:

Angelico's in quiet light
'Mid the aureoles very bright
God is looking from the height.

There the monk his love doth meet:
Once he fell before her feet
Ere within the Abbey sweet

He, while music rose alway
From the Church, to God did pray
That his life might pass away.

There between the angel rows
With the light flame on his brows,
With his friend, the deacon goes:

Hand in hand they go together,
Loving hearts they go together
Where the Presence shineth ever.

Kiss upon the death-bed given,
Kiss on dying forehead given
When the soul goes up to Heaven.

Many thoughts beneath the sun
Thought together; Life is done,
Yet for ever love doth run.

Willow standing 'gainst the blue,
Where the light clouds come and go,
Mindeth me of kiss untrue.

Christ, thine awful cross is thrown
Round the whole world, and thy Sun
Woful kisses looks upon.

* * * * * * *

Eastward slope the shadows now,
Very light the wind does blow,
Scarce it lifts the laurels low;

I cannot say the things I would,
I cannot think the things I would,
How the Cross at evening stood.

Very blue the sky above,
Very sweet the faint clouds move,
Yet I cannot think of love.

"There, dear, perhaps I ought to be ashamed of it, don't spare me. I have begun a good many other

things, I don't know if I shall ever finish them, I shall have to show them to Ted and to you first: you know my failing. I have been in a horrible state of mind about my writing; for I seem to get more and more imbecile as I go on. Do you know, I don't know what to write to you about; there are no facts here to write about; I have no one to talk to, except to ask for things to eat and drink and clothe myself withal; I have read no new books since I saw you, in fact no books at all.

"The other day I went 'a-brassing' near the Thames on the Essex side; I got two remarkable brasses and three or four others that were not remarkable: one was a Flemish brass of a knight, date 1370, very small; another a brass (very small, with the legend gone) of a priest in his shroud; I think there are only two other shrouded brasses in England. The Church that this last brass came from was I think one of the prettiest Churches (for a small village Church) that I have ever seen; the consecration crosses (some of them) were visible, red in a red circle; and there was some very pretty colouring on a corbel, in very good preservation: the parson of the parish shewed us over this Church; he was very civil and very, very dirty and snuffy, inexpressibly so, I can't give you an idea of his dirt and snuffiness."

[The rest of the letter is lost.]

A week later he writes again, with reference to some criticism which Price had made on the poem.

"It was not at sermon-time that I thought of the 'Kisses,' but as the second lesson was being read: you know the second lesson for Palm Sunday has in it the history of the Betrayal. I say, isn't *tomb* a very fair rhyme for *soon* by the way? the rhymes you call

shady, I should like to be able to defend: I think I could do it *viva voce* but can't by letter. . . . It is very foolish, but I have a tenderness for that thing, I was so happy writing it, which I did on Good Friday: it was a lovely day, with a soft warm wind instead of the bitter north east wind we had had for so long. For those bad rhymes, I don't like them, though perhaps I don't feel them hurt me so much as they seem to do you; they are makeshifts, dear Crom: it *is* incompetency; you see I must lose the thought, or sacrifice the rhyme to it, I had rather do the latter and take my chance about the music of it; perhaps I may be able in the course of time to rhyme better, if my stock of thoughts are not exhausted, and I sometimes think they mayn't all be gone for some time.

"I have read a little Shelley since I saw you last; I like it very much what I have read; 'The Skylark' was one: WHAT a gorgeous thing it is! utterly different to anything else I ever read: it makes one feel so different from anything else: I hope I shall be able to make you understand what I mean, for I am a sad muddlehead: I mean that most beautiful poetry, and indeed almost all beautiful writing makes one feel sad, or indignant, or—do you understand, for I can't make it any clearer; but 'The Skylark' makes one feel happy only; I suppose because it is nearly all music, and that it doesn't bring up any thoughts of humanity: but I don't know either.

"I am going a-brassing again some time soon: to Rochester and thereabouts, also to Stoke D'Abernon in Surrey."

With the letter from which these extracts are given were sent two other newly-written poems, mainly noticeable as showing an influence that might not be

otherwise suspected in him, that of Mrs. Browning. She was then at the height of her popularity, and ranked by many critics as the first of living English poets. That noble passion for truth, purity, and freedom which burns through all her writings, which even now lightens and kindles the tangled wildernesses of "Aurora Leigh," was enough then to excuse all her shortcomings. It even threw a positive fascination over her extraordinary mannerisms and floundering technique. Less than a month before his death, when talking of early days, Morris said that his first poems were imitations of Mrs. Browning. This was, perhaps, a little over-stated, but it expressed a real truth. The slovenly rhymes of his earlier poetry may probably be traced to her influence: and it was through her poetry that he became acquainted a little later with that of her husband, to whom he frankly owned his obligations, and of whom in succeeding years he wrote as "high among the poets of all time, and I scarce know whether first or second in our own."

One other unpublished poem of this year survives. It is of a higher technical quality than those just mentioned, and of the same delicate and refined spiritual beauty. It is here transcribed textually from his own manuscript: in the second line of the first stanza the word *leaves* is obviously a slip of the pen for some other word, probably *ground*.

BLANCHE

Broad leaves that I do not know
Grow upon the leaves full low
Over them the wind does blow.

Hemlock leaves I know full well
And about me is the smell
That doth in the spring woods dwell.

And the finch sings cheerily,
And the wren sings merrily,
But the lark sings trancedly.

Silv'ry birch-trunks rise in air
And beneath the birch-tree there
Grows a yellow flower fair.

Many flowers grow around
And about me is the sound
Of the dead leaves on the ground.

Yea, I fell asleep last night
When the moon at her full height
Was a lovely, lovely sight.

I have had a troubled dream
As I lay there in the beam
Of the moon a sudden gleam

Of a white dress shot by me
Yea the white dress frighted me
Flitting by the aspen tree.

Suddenly it turned round
With a weary moaning sound
Lay the white dress on the ground

There she knelt upon her knees
There, between the aspen trees
O! the dream right dreary is.

With her sweet face turned to me
Low she moaned unto me
That she might forgiven be.

O! my lost love moaned there
And her low moans in the air
Sleepy startled birds did hear

O! my dream it makes me weep,
That drear dream I had in sleep
At the thought my pulses leap

For she lay there moaning low
While the solemn wind did sough
While the clouds did over go

Then I lifted up her head
And I softly to her said
Blanche, we twain will soon be dead

Let us pray that we may die
Let us pray that we may lie
Where the softening wind does sigh

That in heaven amid the bliss
Of the blessed where God is
Mid the angels we may kiss.

We may stand with joined hands
Face to face with angel bands
They too stand with joined hands.

Yea, she said, but kiss me now
Ere my sinning spirit go
To the place no man doth know

There I kissed her as she lay
O! her spirit passed away
'Mid the flowers her body lay.

What a dream is this of mine
I am almost like to pine
For this dreary dream of mine.

O dead love thy hand is here
O dead Blanche thy golden hair
Lies along the flowers fair.

I am all aweary love
Of the bright blue sky above
I will lie beside thee love.

So over them over them ever
The long long wind swept on
And lovingly lovingly ever
The birds sang on their song.

Such were the first beginnings. But his discovery that he could write prose came hard on the heels of his discovery that he could write poetry, and for some little time prose was the vehicle in which he could express his thoughts and imaginations with greater

freedom. The prose romances which he began to write in the summer of 1855, and went on writing for about a year, are as remarkable as his early poetry, and have a strength and beauty which is quite as rare. But during this year he and Burne-Jones read through Chaucer. He found, in the poet whom he afterwards took for his special master, not merely the wider and sweeter view of life which was needed to correct the harsh or mystical elements of his own mediævalism, but the conquest of English verse as a medium boundless in its range and perfect in its flexibility. Thenceforth prose was abandoned, and, with the exception of one curious and unsuccessful experiment, verse remained for thirty years the single form of his production in pure literature.

The secularization of mind, the widening of interest and outlook beyond the limits prescribed by Anglo-Catholic ideals, towards which the influence of Chaucer and Browning, like two great windows letting in the air and the day, contributed so potently, was coming fast over him in this third year at Oxford—the time in the lives of so many men which is decisive of their whole future. Art and literature were no longer thought of as handmaids to religion, but as ends to be pursued for their own sake, not indeed as a means of gaining livelihood, but as a means of realizing life. More and more it became evident that the taking of Orders, with a direct view to which both Morris and Burne-Jones had gone up to Oxford, was irreconcilable with such a life as they now proposed to themselves. And the idea of common organized effort by the whole group towards a higher life, which for long had been eagerly planned, gradually shifted from the form of a monastic to that of a social brotherhood.

There was a time, early in Morris's undergraduate

days, when he had seriously thought of devoting the whole of his fortune to the foundation of a monastery. Such ideas were widely in the air. The community at Littlemore was a centre of influence and a place of pilgrimage, as familiar to all Oxford as the spire of St. Mary's. Similar communities had sprung up in other parts of the country. Some seven years before, Street, the great architect of the revived Gothic, then a young man of twenty-six, had been deeply engaged with a scheme for the foundation of an institution, combining the characters of a college, a monastery, and a workshop, for students of the theory and practice of religious art. Such a community had been actually founded in Rome, a generation earlier, by the German painters Cornelius and Overbeck. That group of religious artists, a curious anticipation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, had lived in a Roman palace under a sort of monastic rule; and though the community had ceased to exist about the time when the Tractarian movement in England began, some tradition of it survived to kindle the imagination of younger men. Street had been living in Oxford since 1852 as architect to the diocese, had restored many of the Oxford churches, and was building the great church of SS. Philip and James in the northern outskirts of the city, one of the earliest and purest examples of a return to the architecture of the thirteenth century. Morris did not yet know him personally: but this early project of his, and similar schemes of others, had obtained a large currency.

The earliest distinct allusion to the scheme which, never realized in its original intention, bore fruit of unexpected growth in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine and the firm of Morris & Company, comes in a letter from Burne-Jones, dated 1st of May, 1853,

to a schoolfellow still in Birmingham, but preparing to go up to Oxford. The time-honoured observances which still make May-Day morning hideous in Oxford with the blare of countless whistles and horns seem then to have been resumed with added spirit in the evening, and wound up in scenes resembling those of the Fifth of November. "Ten o'clock, evening," he writes. "I have just been pouring basons of water on the crowd below from Dixon's garret—such fun, by Jove:" and then goes on, "I have set my heart on our founding a Brotherhood. Learn 'Sir Galahad' by heart; he is to be the patron of our Order. I have enlisted one in the project up here, heart and soul." A few months later he writes again, "We must enlist you in this Crusade and Holy Warfare against the age;" the crusade then definitely including celibacy and conventual life.

The last allusion to this scheme in its original conception is in another letter written by Burne-Jones to the same correspondent from Birmingham on the 16th of October, 1854, at the end of the Long Vacation. Term had been postponed for a week on account of the cholera epidemic. "You were surprised no doubt," he writes, "at the postponement of term. It made me very angry, for I was sick of home and idleness and longed with an ardent longing to be back with Morris and his glorious little company of martyrs—the monastery stands a fairer chance than ever of being founded; I know that it will be some day."

But this assurance lacks its old ring of conviction. By the end of that year the religious struggle which seemed for a while likely to land both Morris and Burne-Jones in the Roman Church was practically over, and with this clearing of the air social ideals rose to a more important place, and the monastic element

began to fade away from the ideas of the Brotherhood. Price and Faulkner brought to Oxford actual knowledge of the inhuman conditions of human life in the great industrial areas; their special enthusiasms were for sanitation, for Factory Acts, for the bare elements of a possible life among the mass of their fellow-citizens. "Things were at their worst," the former writes, "in the forties and fifties. There was no protection for the mill-hand or miner—no amusements but prize-fighting, dog-fighting, cock-fighting, and drinking. When a little boy I saw many prize-fights, bestial scenes: at one a combatant was killed. The country was going to hell apace. At Birmingham School a considerable section of the upper boys were quite awake to the crying evils of the period; social reform was a common topic of conversation. We were nearly all day-boys, and we could not make short cuts to school without passing through slums of shocking squalor and misery, and often coming across incredible scenes of debauchery and brutality. I remember one Saturday night walking five miles from Birmingham into the Black Country, and in the last three miles I counted more than thirty lying dead drunk on the ground, nearly half of them women." Such surroundings impressed indelibly on those who lived in them the ground truth that all true freedom, all living art, all real morality, even among the limited class who are raised out of the common level by wealth or circumstance, finally depend upon the physical and social conditions of life which exist for the mass of their fellow-creatures. It was not till long afterwards that this view of the matter took full hold of Morris, the country-bred boy, the easy liver and born aristocrat. But its influence was already sufficient to insure him against the belief that salva-

tion lay in dreams of the past or in isolation from the common life of the world.

Another influence during this year tended in the same direction. Morris and several others of his set used to go pretty regularly to fence, box, and play singlestick at Maclaren's Gymnasium in Oriel Lane. Singlestick was Morris's own chief delight. "In defence," writes a friend, "he was unskilful, vehement and iron-handed in attack. I bore for years after discolorations that were due to his relentless onsets." Maclaren once said that Morris's bills for broken sticks and foils equalled those of all the rest of his pupils put together. Between them and Maclaren himself, a man in the prime of life, cultivated and full of enthusiasm, a mutual intimacy and liking sprang up, and grew into a warm friendship. Three or four times in the term they would go and dine with him at Summertown, where they saw their own enthusiasms combined with the charm of a simple family life. There could be no better corrective for the narrowing influence of college monasticism. This larger life was reinforced by their outdoor tastes and their remoteness from the little circle of occupations in which so many Oxford men become hopelessly shut up. For men who did not spend their afternoons in rowing or cricket, a walk in cap and gown up Headington or round Christ Church meadows, discussing questions of theology, would seem from records of Oxford life in that period to have been the normal occupation of an undergraduate's afternoon. Morris's daily pursuits had a range which would not now be remarkable, but was then almost unexampled. The Tractarian impulse survived in the practice, to which he and Burne-Jones adhered for a long time, of going to sing plain-song at the daily morning services in St. Thomas's Church. With

Dixon and Price, they belonged to the Plain-Song Society, which practised regularly in the Music-Room in Holywell. It included among its members men of very varied tastes and ideals: zealous churchmen and freethinking antiquarians; moderate Anglicans like Liddon and Oakley, votaries of the Eastern Church like Neale and Palmer; Street and Woodward the architects, Dyce the painter. Long afternoons were passed on the upper river and among the ruins (more extensive then) of Godstow, or in expeditions to old churches, ranging from Dorchester to Woodstock, or in the glades of the Wytham woods. Evenings of excited talk and reading slid into the long nights in which Morris poured forth the results in prose and verse of his newly-discovered creative power; and all the while, as the old ideals melted away before larger enthusiasms, the mistress art of architecture, with all else—music, painting, the whole range of forms and colours and sounds—swept up into its train, took a continually deeper and more dominating hold. So passed the spring and summer days of 1855, while Tennyson at Farringford was putting the last touches to "Maud," and the English cannon thundered before Sebastopol.

CHAPTER III

THE BROTHERHOOD

1855-1856

In the summer term of 1855, the Brotherhood, as they now began to call themselves, came up to Oxford full of ideas and enthusiasms that could no longer be suppressed, and that demanded some active outlet. The primitive or monastic ideals of the previous year were fading away before a wider knowledge and a more quickened intelligence. The serious employments of mature life lay still seemingly far ahead, and meanwhile the art of literature made its first appeal to them with all the charm and potency which, in those susceptible years and amid those romantic surroundings, it so inexhaustibly renews over minds full of the first ardour of knowledge and the earliest consciousness of manhood. The newly discovered power and delight of original imaginative writing, and their dissatisfaction with the current tone of thought on all matters deeply affecting human life, alike urged them to some literary enterprise in which imagination and criticism should find harmonious expression. To find some united and organized method of bringing their beliefs and enthusiasms before the world, to join actively in the crusade of which Carlyle, Ruskin, and Tennyson were the ac-

cepted leaders, became the first object of their ambition; and their plans now took definite shape in the resolution to found and conduct a magazine of a really high order. It was not to be one of the ephemeral productions, blossoms of the flying terms, which succeed one another year after year at both Universities, but equivalent in substantial value to Blackwood's or Fraser's, the two leading monthlies of the time. The first suggestion of this magazine was made by Dixon to Morris. It was taken up eagerly by the others. Co-operation was invited from Cambridge, where Wilfred Heeley had, while keeping up a close friendship with his old schoolfellows at Oxford, gathered round him a set of the ablest and most eager of the Trinity men. He was just about to go up for examination for the Indian Civil Service, but was cordial in his support and sympathy. At the end of the term Morris and Burne-Jones went to Cambridge for a week at his invitation, and the plan of the joint venture was farther discussed. As a matter of fact, however, the magazine, while it bore on its title-page the words "Conducted by members of the two Universities," was wholly conducted, and for by far the greater part written, by the Oxford group. At Trinity, Heeley showed them, to their intense delight, the Tennyson volume of 1830, containing two poems which kindled them to rapture, the long-suppressed "Hesperides" and the earlier version of "Mariana in the South."

From Cambridge, Morris returned home to Walthamstow. A plan had been arranged between him and Burne-Jones to go a month later for a walking tour in Normandy: Fulford and Price were also to be of the party, but Price, rather to the dismay of the other two, was prevented from going. The following letter appears to have been written on the 6th of July, a few

days after the Cambridge visit. The allusions to the magazine (for which "The Brotherhood" was then one of the suggested titles) show that arrangements were already well forward for starting it. That year's Exhibition of the Royal Academy included Leighton's famous picture of the Procession of Cimabue's Madonna and Millais's "Rescue," and also a picture by Maclise of the wrestling scene from "As You Like It." The other allusions explain themselves.

"Friday morning.
"Walthamstow.

"Dearest Crom,

"What am I to say about your letter? for I was very glad to get a letter from you even though it brought such bad news; and you should not have said what you did say about Fulford, for though I like him very much, and though he will without doubt be a very pleasant travelling companion, yet to me he is a very poor substitute for you. . . . Please write as often as you can. I am so awfully glad to hear that you are writing something, do let me see anything you do, I am not at all afraid of it; I should think Trench's 'Study of Words' would do very [well,] but that as it's a little bit old, it would perhaps be better to put it in the second or third number, rather than the first, but by all means write it; I have finished the tale I began last term and failed signally therein, I am afraid that it won't do for the 'Brotherhood'; I am going to send it to Dixon and Ted to look at, and see if it is altogether hopeless, will you look at it too? . . . If you remember, you were to review 'North and South'; are you thinking of it?

"As to Cambridge, it is rather a hole of a place, and can't compare for a moment with Oxford; it is

such a very different kind of place too, that one feels inclined to laugh, at least I do, when I think of it. I suppose by this time, Ted has told you all about it, and how we went to see Ely, which disappointed me somewhat, it is so horribly spoilt with very well meant restorations, as they facetiously term them; the bit of a hill that the Cathedral stands on is very jolly however, green fields and gardens and many trees, all dotted about with quaint old houses, and bits of the old conventual buildings; there are several gorgeous bits about the Church too, and outside happily it has been hardly touched, which makes the exterior much more beautiful and interesting than the interior.

"I saw the Exhibition the other day and liked the Procession of Cimabue better than I thought I should have done, as I said to Ted, I wish I hadn't seen Ruskin's Pamphlet before seeing the picture, for I don't know now what effect his commendation may have had upon me. Millais's Picture is indeed grand, how gorgeously the dawning is painted! I had been sitting up late the night before, and saw the dawn break, through the window in our hall, just as it might have been there, minus the smoke. There was a very sweet little picture by Collins in the Octagon room, called 'The Good Harvest of '54,' did you notice it? I think Maclise's picture about as bad as possible, fancy the brute spoiling one of the best scenes in your favourite comedy, don't you hate him therefore? I saw Dyce's 'Christabel' and thought the face very sweet; but Ruskin says the face is a copy; certainly it doesn't help me at all to the understanding of Coleridge's Poem.

"I saw that same day an impression of Albert Dürer's S. Hubert, and very nearly bought it but couldn't afford it, the same being 6 guineas; I think

I should have done so though if I wasn't living in hope of getting a photograph of it; the photographs represent the engravings much better than I thought they did, looking very much like impressions whose paper is yellow by age, only somewhat darker: what a splendid engraving that S. Hubert is! O my word! so very, very gorgeous.

"I bought some engravings from Fra Angelico's picture in the Louvre, I am afraid only pretty good; will you have them? they represent the picture fairly I think on the whole, only the loss of colour makes of course a most enormous difference, where the colour is so utterly lovely as in the original—well, I hope you will like them. I have just been doing them up into a parcel whose clumsiness is something absolutely glorious, it is so clumsy. O this steel pen!—tell me if they reach you safely. Well, good-bye. I have forgotten what else I had to say to you, though I know I had plenty.

"Yours most lovingly,
"TOPSY."

The names, and some of the work, of the Pre-Raphaelite school were by this time becoming known to Morris and his companions, though the artists themselves were still unknown to them. In the summer term at Oxford he and Burne-Jones had seen Mr. Coombe's collection at the Clarendon Press, which included two pictures by Holman Hunt and Rossetti's water-colour of Dante drawing the head of Beatrice. During the Easter vacation, in the "very pretty old-fashioned house on Tottenham Green" belonging to Mr. Windus, they had seen for the first time pictures by Millais and Madox Brown. A copy of "The Germ" had also about the same time fallen into their

hands; and from "Hand and Soul" and "The Blessed Damozel," which they read and re-read for ever, Rossetti rose to a first-rank place in their list of heroes.

On the 19th of July, Morris, Burne-Jones, and Fulford started on their tour in France, crossing from Folkestone and going straight to Abbeville. "We meant it to be really a walking tour," Sir Edward Burne-Jones writes, "for cheapness' sake: not that we walked far, but started with fine ideas of economy, necessary for me and conceded by him, who never said whether he had, or had not, money. We went to Abbeville, and there I drew, and to Amiens, and to Beauvais, he falling lame at Amiens, filling the streets with imprecations on all bootmakers; but he bought a pair of gay carpet-slippers, and in these he walked from Clermont to Beauvais, about 18 miles. But from this point, as he was footsore, we tried no more walking, but went everywhere by rail or diligence. We took a volume of Keats with us, and no other book: he knew everything about every place we went to. There was a little quarrel as to whether we should go to Paris or not, for though we wanted to go to Chartres, which lay south of it, he would have had us skirt the city, even by two days' journey, so as not to see the streets of it. But I wanted to see the pictures in the Louvre, and Fulford wanted to see Paris, and after all there was the Hotel Cluny to pacify him with. He had told me that Notre Dame would be a sight miserable to look at, for the sculptures were half down and lying in careless wrecks under the porches. He was fidgetty in Paris, and after three days we hurried away and went straight to Chartres."

On the 25th of July Fulford wrote from Chartres: "On the morning after arrival at Paris we went first to the Sainte Chapelle; thence to the Beaux Arts de-

partment of the Exposition: conceive our delight to find no less than seven Pre-Raphaelite among the English pictures: three by Hunt, including the Light of the World, three by Millais, one by Collins. They seemed to be entirely unappreciated, except the Order of Release, which attracted a great many from time to time. In the evening to the Opera, to hear Alboni in Le Prophète. Jones was enraptured; Morris seemed a good deal bored. Yesterday to the Louvre. We have moved again, to Morris's great delight: he has been dying to leave Paris and get to Chartres."

Another letter from Morris to Price, at the end of the three weeks' trip, gives the rest of its history.

"Avranches, Normandy,
"August 10th, 1855.

"Dearest Crom,

"I haven't quite forgotten you yet, though I have been so long writing, but the fact is, I am quite uncomfortable even now about writing a letter to you, for I don't know what to say; I suppose you won't be satisfied with the names merely of the places we have been to; and I scarcely think I can give you anything else. Why couldn't you come, Crom? O! the glories of the Churches we have seen! for we have seen the last of them now, we finished up with Mont S. Michel yesterday and are waiting here (which is a very beautiful place however,) till Saturday evening or Sunday morning when we shall go back to Granville and take steamer for Jersey and Southampton. Crom, we have seen nine Cathedrals, and let me see how many non-Cathedral Churches; I must count them on my fingers; there, I think I have missed some but I have made out 24 all splendid Churches; some of them surpassing first-rate English Cathedrals.

"I am glad that Fulford has lightened my load a little bit, by telling you what we did as far as Chartres: so I won't begin till after we left that place: Well, Crom, you must know that we had thought that we should be forced to go back to Paris to get to Rouen and that we should be obliged to go by railway all the way, which grew so distasteful to us after a bit, that we made efforts, and found that we could get across the country with very little railway indeed; so we went; I enjoyed the journey very much, and so did the others I think, though Ted's eyes were bad, as they have been all the time whenever the sun has been out: we went the greater part of the way in a queer little contrivance with one horse the greater part of the way. Behold our itinerary. We started from Chartres quite early (six o'clock) with drizzling rain that almost hid the spires of the Cathedral, how splendid they looked in the midst of it! but we were obliged to leave them, and the beautiful statues, and the stained glass, and the great, cliff-like buttresses, for quite a long time I'm afraid—so we went for about 20 miles by railroad to a place called Maintenon, where we mounted the quaint little conveyance and went off, with the rain still falling a little, through the beautiful country to Dreux, for a distance of about 17 miles; there was plenty to look at by the road, I almost think I like that part of the country better than any other part of the lovely country we have seen in France; so gloriously the trees are grouped, all manner of trees, but more especially the graceful poplars and aspens, of all kinds; and the hedgeless fields of grain, and beautiful herbs that they grow for forage whose names I don't know, the most beautiful fields I ever saw yet, looking as if they belonged to no man, as if they were planted not to be cut down in the end, and to

be stored in barns and eaten by the cattle, but that rather they were planted for their beauty only, that they might grow always among the trees, mingled with the flowers, purple thistles, and blue cornflowers, and red poppies, growing together with the corn round the roots of the fruit trees, in their shadows, and sweeping up to the brows of the long low hills till they reached the sky, changing sometimes into long fields of vines, or delicate, lush green forage; and they all looked as [if] they would grow there for ever, as if they had always grown there, without change of seasons, knowing no other time than the early August. So we went on through this kind of country till we came to Dreux, and the rain had cleared up long before we reached it, and it was a bright sunny day. Some distance from Dreux the country changed very much into what I will tell you afterwards, but a great part of Picardy and the Isle of France seemed to be a good deal the same kind of country, and the land between Rouen and Caudebec, along the side of the Seine, was much like this, so much so, that I think I had it in my mind a good deal just now; perhaps it is even lovelier than this, the hills are much higher, but I scarcely think the flowers are so rich, or perhaps, when we went through it, the flowers had gone off a good deal. Well, we had to stop at Dreux about an hour and we saw the church there, a very good one, flamboyant mostly, but with an earlier apse very evilly used, and with a transept front very elaborately carved once, now very forlorn and battered, but (Deo gratias) not yet restored: there is a delightful old secular tower at Dreux too, and that is flamboyant also, with a roof like the side of a cliff, it is so steep. So we left Dreux, and set our faces as though we would go to Evreux; we were obliged to undergo about half an

hour's ride in the railway before we got there, to my intense indignation. We had only a very short time to stay at Evreux, and even that short time we had to divide (alas! for our Lower Nature) between eating our dinner and gazing on the gorgeous Cathedral: it is an exceedingly lovely one, though not nearly so large as most of the Cathedrals we saw, the aisles are very rich flamboyant, with a great deal of light canopy work about them; the rest of the Church is earlier, the nave being Norman, and the choir fully developed early Gothic; though the transepts and lantern are flamboyant also by the way: there is a great deal of good stained glass about the Church. When we left Evreux we found that the country had changed altogether, getting much more hilly, almost as glorious in its way as the other land perhaps, but very different; for it is a succession of quite flat valleys surrounded on all sides by hills of very decent height with openings in them to let out the river, the valleys are very well wooded, and the fields a good deal like the other ones I have described, quite without hedges, and with fruit-trees growing all about them; so we kept going on, first winding up a long hill, then on a table land for a greater or less time, then down into the glorious lake-like valley, till at last we got to Louviers; there is a splendid church there, though it is not a large one; the outside has a kind of mask of the most gorgeous flamboyant (though late) thrown all over it, with such parapets and windows, it is so gorgeous and light, that I was utterly unprepared for the inside, and almost startled by it; so solemn it looked and calm after the fierce flamboyant of the outside; for all the interior, except the Chapels, is quite early Gothic and very beautiful; I have never, either before or since, been so much struck with the difference between

the early and late Gothic, and by the greater nobleness of the former. So after we had looked at the Church for a little time we mounted the omnibus to go to the railway station where we were to take train to Rouen—it was about 5 miles I should think from Louviers to the station. What a glorious ride that was, with the sun, which was getting low by that time, striking all across the valley that Louviers lies in; I think that valley was the most glorious of all we saw that day, there was not much grain there, it was nearly all grass land and the trees, O! the trees! it was all like the country in a beautiful poem, in a beautiful Romance such as might make a background to Chaucer's Palamon and Arcite; how we could see the valley winding away along the side of the Eure a long way, under the hills: but we had to leave it and go to Rouen by a nasty, brimstone, noisy, shrieking railway train that cares not twopence for hill or valley, poplar tree or lime tree, corn poppy or blue cornflower, or purple thistle and purple vetch, white convolvulus, white clematis, or golden S. John's wort; that cares not twopence either for tower, or spire, or apse, or dome, for it will be as noisy and obtrusive under the spires of Chartres or the towers of Rouen, as it is [under] Versailles or the Dome of the Invalides; verily railways are ABOMINATIONS; and I think I have never fairly realised this fact till this our tour: fancy, Crom, all the roads (or nearly all) that come into Rouen dip down into the valley where it lies, from gorgeous hills which command the most splendid views of Rouen, but we, coming into Rouen by railway, crept into it in the most seedy way, seeing actually nothing at all of it till we were driving through the town in an omnibus.

"I had some kind of misgivings that I might be

disappointed with Rouen, after my remembrances of it from last year;' but I wasn't a bit. O! what a place it is. I think Ted liked the Cathedral, on the whole, better than any other church we saw. We were disappointed in one thing, however, we had expected Vespers every afternoon, we found they were only sung in that diocese on Saturday and Sunday. And weren't they sung, just. O! my word! on the Sunday especially, when a great deal of the psalms were sung to the Peregrine tone, and then, didn't they sing the hymns?

"I bought the Newcomes at Rouen, Tauchnitz edition, it is a splendid book. Well Crom, I can't write any more, I am fairly run down; I am tired too, and have got to pack up as well, which is always somewhat of a bore; when I see you (which I hope will be soon) I will tell you about the rest. Ah me! if only you had been here, how I have longed for you! so very, very much. This is a seedy letter to send to such a fellow as you are, Crom, please forgive me, and be jolly when I see you. Shall I see you at Birmingham?

"Your most loving
"Topsy."

Even to so intimate a friend, however, this letter keeps silence as to the great event of the journey. The careless freedom of that summer holiday, with the glories of the world lying all about the fair land, among the sweet breath and colour of the fields, broke down the last hesitations. Walking together on the quays of Havre late into the August night, Morris and Burne-Jones at last took the definite decision to be artists and to postpone everything else in this world to art. It was decided that night that neither should proceed to take Orders; that the Oxford life should

be wound up as quickly as possible; and that thereafter Burne-Jones should be a painter, and Morris an architect. From the art which he then chose for his own the former never swerved or wavered. Morris did not graduate as a professional architect, nor in all his life did he ever build a house. But for him, then and always, the word architecture bore an immense, and one might almost say a transcendental, meaning. Connected at a thousand points with all the other specific arts which ministered to it out of a thousand sources, it was itself the tangible expression of all the order, the comeliness, the sweetness, nay, even the mystery and the law, which sustain man's world and make human life what it is. To him the House Beautiful represented the visible form of life itself. Not only as a craftsman and manufacturer, a worker in dyed stuffs and textiles and glass, a pattern designer and decorator, but throughout the whole range of life, he was from first to last the architect, the master-craftsman, whose range of work was so phenomenal and his sudden transitions from one to another form of productive energy so swift and perplexing because, himself secure in the centre, he struck outwards to any point of the circumference with equal directness, with equal precision, unperplexed by artificial subdivisions of art, and untrammelled by any limiting rules of professional custom.

In the prose romance, written a few months after he took this momentous decision, which has been already noted as containing many fragments of half-conscious autobiography, the hero describes himself in the following significant words: "Ever since I can remember, even when I was quite a child, people have always told me that I had no perseverance, no strength of will; they have always kept on saying to me, directly

and indirectly, 'Unstable as water thou shalt not excel;' and they have always been quite wrong in this matter, for of all men I ever heard of, I have the strongest will for good and evil. I could soon find out whether a thing were possible or not to me; then if it were not, I threw it away for ever, never thought of it again, no regret, no longing for that, it was past and over to me; but if it were possible, and I made up my mind to do it, then and there I began it, and in due time finished it, turning neither to the right hand nor the left till it was done. So I did with all things that I set my hand to. Love only, and the wild restless passions that went with it, were too strong for me, and they bent my strong will, so that people think me now a weak man, with no end to make for in the purposeless wanderings of my life."

Two other great disturbing forces there were which came at long intervals into his life. One was the temporarily overpowering influence of Rossetti, that masterful personality which swayed every one who approached it out of his own orbit. The other was more impersonal and more impalpable, the patient revenge of the modern or scientific spirit, so long fought against, first by his aristocratic, and then by his artistic instincts, when it took hold of him against his will and made him a dogmatic Socialist. Apart from these influences and their effects, he continued as he began; the rare instance of a man who, without ever once swerving from truth or duty, knew what he liked, and did what he liked, all his life long.

A few days after returning from France, Morris rejoined Burne-Jones at Birmingham. There also were Fulford and Price, and Heeley had just returned after passing his examination for the Indian Civil Service. Dixon was at home at Liverpool, reading Carlyle's

"French Revolution" and pondering over the difficulties of original composition. Three weeks were spent at Birmingham in furious reading and talking, and in the further incubation of the magazine. The following extracts from a diary kept by Price's younger sister are not without quiet humour:

"Aug. 22. Fan (an elder sister) was invited over to Jones' to meet Morris. Fulford also was there. F. says Morris is very handsome.

"Aug. 23. Fulford, Morris, and Jones came over to tea and supper. Morris *is* very handsome.

"Aug. 27. Crom, Edward, and Morris went to Dudley Castle: came here to tea and supper, and Fulford later on. Fulford read 'The Palace of Art' 'Vision of Sin' and 'Oenone.' Morris also read, but he is a queer reader.

"Sept. 2. Edward and Morris came to tea and supper. We had great fun: Morris got so excited once that he punched his own head and threw his arms about frantically."

From Price's own diary an extract has also been preserved.

"Sept. 7. Ted, Top, and Fulford came over to tea and supper. Had much talk with Top about architecture and organization of labour. Discussed the tone of reviews in general, and 'Blackwood' in particular. It is unanimously agreed that there is to be no shewing off, no quips, no sneers, no lampooning in our Magazine."

(Aytoun's unsympathetic review of "Maud" in Blackwood's Magazine for that month had been the last drop in the cup of their indignation against the tone of current literary criticism. "Maud" had been hailed by the set with unalloyed enthusiasm.)

"Sept. 9. Saw Ted and Topsy. Talked chiefly

about the review. Politics to be almost eschewed: to be mainly Tales, Poetry, friendly Critiques, and social articles."

During this visit to Birmingham Burne-Jones took Morris to Cornish's, the bookseller's shop in New Street, where, in accordance with the leisurely eighteenth century practice that still lingered in provincial towns, customers were allowed to drop in and read books from the shelves. There Burne-Jones had passed "hundreds of hours" in this employment; and there lately he had found and begun to read a copy of Southey's edition of Malory's "Morte d'Arthur," a work till then unknown to either of the two, and one which Burne-Jones could not afford to buy. Morris bought it at first sight, and it at once became for both one of their most precious treasures: so precious that even among their intimates there was some shyness over it, till a year later they heard Rossetti speak of it and the Bible as the two greatest books in the world, and their tongues were unloosed by the sanction of his authority.

The resolution to become an architect, once taken, was put into effect without delay. After the visit to Birmingham, Morris at once began to read hard for his Final Schools and to place himself in communication with Mr. Street with a view of entering his office in Oxford as soon as possible. On the 29th of September he writes to Price from Walthamstow:

"I went to Malvern the day after I parted from you, it is certainly a very splendid place, but very much spoiled by being made into a kind of tea gardens for idle people. The Abbey bells rang all the day for the fall of Sebastopol, and when I went by railway to Clay Cross the next day, they had hoisted flags up everywhere, particularly on the chimneys at Burton—at Chesterfield they had a flag upon the top of their

particularly ugly twisted spire—at Clay Cross, by some strange delusion, they had hoisted all over the place the *Russian* tricolour (viz., horizontal stripes of blue, red, and white,) thinking, honest folks, that it was the French flag; they have no peal of bells at Clay Cross, only one bell of a singularly mild and chapelly nature, said bell was tolled by the patriotic inhabitants ALL day long, the effect of which I leave you to imagine. My life is going to become a burden to me, for I am going, (beginning from Tuesday next) to read for six hours a day at Livy, Ethics, &c.—please pity me."

A week later he writes again in a more serious tone:

"Thank you very much for taking so much interest in me—but make your mind easy about my coming back next term, I am certainly coming back, though I should not have done so if it had not been for my Mother; I don't think even if I get through Greats that I shall take my B.A., because they won't allow you not to sign the 39 Articles unless you declare that you are 'extra Ecclesiam Anglicanam' which I'm not, and don't intend to be, and I won't sign the 39 Articles. Of course I should like to stay up at Oxford for a much longer time, but (I told you, didn't I?) I am going, if I can, to be an architect, and I am too old already and there is no time to lose, I MUST make haste, it would not do for me, dear Crom, even for the sake of being with you, to be a lazy, aimless, useless, dreaming body all my life long, I have wasted enough time already, God knows; not that I regret having gone to Oxford, how could I? for I should be a very poor helpless kind of thing without Ted and you. Didn't I tell you that I meant to ask Street of Oxford if he would take me? I intended to tell you, if I didn't; if that could happen, it would be glorious,

for then I need not leave Oxford at all. Ah well, may it be so!"

At home the change in his plan of life caused indeed disappointment and almost consternation. It had always been taken for granted that he was to enter the Church. The feelings with which Colonel Newcome received Clive's intimation that he was going to be a painter were still those of nearly the whole of the wealthier middle class. Bohemia was a strange foreign kingdom. To be a painter was barely respectable; even to be an architect—a profession in which there was at all events definite office work and possibility of wealth and honour—was to cut oneself away from the staid traditions of respectability. Mrs. Morris at first hardly credited the project announced to her; and it was not until he was safe at Oxford and among his friends again that he ventured to lay his intentions clearly before her. Term was half over when the following letter, written after deep thought and with an unsurpassable delicacy of tenderness, set the matter before her as fixed beyond recall.

"Ex: Coll: Oxon.
"Nov. 11th, 1855.

"My dear Mother,

"I am almost afraid you thought me scarcely in earnest when I told you a month or two ago that I did not intend taking Holy Orders; if this is the case I am afraid also that my letter now may vex you; but if you have really made up your mind that I was in earnest I should hope you will be pleased with my resolution. You said then, you remember, and said very truly, that it was an evil thing to be an idle objectless man; I am fully determined not to incur this reproach, I was so then, though I did not tell you

at the time all I thought of, partly because I had not thought about it enough myself, and partly because I wished to give you time to become reconciled to the idea of my continuing a lay person. I wish now to be an architect, an occupation I have often had hankerings after, even during the time when I intended taking Holy Orders; the signs of which hankerings you yourself have doubtless often seen. I think I can imagine some of your objections, reasonable ones too, to this profession—I hope I shall be able to relieve them. First I suppose you think that you have as it were thrown away money on my kind of apprenticeship for the Ministry; let your mind be easy on this score; for, in the first place, an University education fits a man about as much for being a ship-captain as a Pastor of souls: besides your money has by no means been thrown away, if the love of friends faithful and true, friends first seen and loved here, if this love is something priceless, and not to be bought again anywhere and by any means: if moreover by living here and seeing evil and sin in its foulest and coarsest forms, as one does day by day, I have learned to hate any form of sin, and to wish to fight against it, is not this well too? Think, I pray you, Mother, that all this is for the best: moreover if any fresh burden were to be laid upon you, it would be different, but as I am able to provide myself for my new course of life, the new money to be paid matters nothing. If I were not to follow this occupation I in truth know not what I should follow with any chance of success, or hope of happiness in my work; in this I am pretty confident I shall succeed, and make I hope a decent architect sooner or later; and you know too that in any work that one delights in, even the merest drudgery connected with it is delightful too. I shall be master too of a useful

trade; one by which I should hope to earn money, not altogether precariously, if other things fail. I myself have had to overcome many things in making up my mind to this; it will be rather grievous to my pride and selfwill to have to do just as I am told for three long years, but good for it too, I think; rather grievous to my love of idleness and leisure to have to go through all the drudgery of learning a new trade, but for that also good. Perhaps you think that people will laugh at me, and call me purposeless and changeable; I have no doubt they will, but I in my turn will try to shame them, God being my helper, by steadiness and hard work. Will you tell Henrietta that I can quite sympathise with her disappointment, that I think I understand it, but I hope it will change to something else before long, if she sees me making myself useful; for that I will by no means give up things I have thought of for the bettering of the world in so far as lies in me.

"You see I do not hope to be great at all in anything, but perhaps I may reasonably hope to be happy in my work, and sometimes when I am idle and doing nothing, pleasant visions go past me of the things that may be. You may perhaps think this a long silly letter about a simple matter, but it seems to me to be kindest to tell you what I was thinking of somewhat at length, and to try, if ever so unsuccessfully, to make you understand my feelings a little: moreover I remember speaking somewhat roughly to you when we had conversation last on this matter, speaking indeed far off from my heart because of my awkwardness, and I thought I would try to mend this a little now; have I done so at all?

"To come to details on this matter. I purpose asking Mr. Street of Oxford to take me as his pupil:

he is a good architect, as things go now, and has a great deal of business, and always goes for an honourable man; I should learn what I want of him if of anybody, but if I fail there (as I may, for I don't know at all if he would take a pupil) I should apply to some London architect, in which case I should have the advantage of living with you if you continue to live near London, and the sooner the better, I think, for I am already old for this kind of work. Of course I should pay myself the premium and all that.

"My best love to yourself, and Henrietta, and Aunt, and all of them:

"Your most affectionate son

"WILLIAM.

"P.S. May I ask you to show this letter to no one else but Henrietta."

This term at Oxford was the busiest and happiest of all. The Brotherhood had grown into a close union of minds and hearts, an intimate fellowship in all projects and ideas and enthusiasms. To such a period of common youth and hope, the isolation of later life must turn backward with deep gratitude, yet with such a passionate sense of loss as one might have who found himself alone in a strange world. "Forsooth," says John Ball in his sermon at the village cross, "he that waketh in hell and feeleth his heart fail him shall have memory of the merry days of earth, and how that when his heart failed him there he cried on his fellow, and how that his fellow heard him and came."

Morris passed in the Final Schools without difficulty: the negotiations with Street were successful, and it was arranged that he should be formally articled at

the beginning of the year. The set were for the last time all together; Fulford, who had taken his degree a year before and had for a time been teaching in a school at Wimbledon, having returned to Oxford, and Heeley being also there for a considerable part of the term. During this term, too, Morris found a new occupation for his busy fingers. A volume of poems by William Allingham, entitled "Day and Night Songs," had just appeared, containing a woodcut from a drawing by Rossetti. Writing to his mother in this year Rossetti speaks of "Allingham's new Collection of Poems, where there are some illustrations by Hughes, one by Millais, and one which used to be by me till it became the exclusive work of Dalziel, who cut it. I was resolved to cut it out, but Allingham would not, so I can only wish Dalziel had the credit as well as the authorship." To Allingham himself he wrote of it with equal dismay, speaking of a "stupid preconceived notion about intended 'severity' in the design" on the part of the engraver, "which has resulted in an engraving as hard as a nail, and yet flabby and vapid to the last degree." Severity, in the noblest sense, the design possesses as one element of its beauty. Both Morris and Burne-Jones pored over it continually. The latter wrote of it as "I think the most beautiful drawing for an illustration I have ever seen": and Morris at once set to work at drawing on wood and cutting the designs himself.

Entries in Price's diary show the progress of the magazine meanwhile.

"Nov. 6. After Hall to Faulkner's where I helped Top to concoct a letter to the publishers.

"Nov. 17. Evening to Dixon's: Solemn conclave as to the form title &c. of the coming Mag. Ultimately decided on 72 pages monthly.

"Nov. 22. Ground at a prospectus with Top: in the evening to Pembroke and go on with the prospectus, Fulford joining in and doing lion's share."

The publishers were Messrs. Bell and Daldy; and the first number of "The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, conducted by Members of the two Universities," appeared on the 1st of January, 1856. Twelve monthly numbers duly appeared. At the end of the year the financial drain, Morris's own engrossment in other occupations, and the rapidly divergent interests of the principal contributors, led to its discontinuance. The price of each number was a shilling. But this moderate sum was found too high for the amount of matter by some purchasers, and was thought to have injured the circulation. Each number consists of from 60 to 72 pages in double column, and the contents are classified as Essays, Tales, Poetry, and Notices of Books. The financial responsibility was undertaken wholly by Morris, the only one of the projectors who could easily do so; though Dixon, out of more limited means, was anxious to help. At first Morris had the general control which, in default of more specific arrangements, follows the control of the purse. But the details of publishing were little to his taste, and as a corrector of proofs he was not very competent. Before the second number appeared the editorship had been formally assigned to Fulford, to whom Morris paid a salary of £100 a year for the performance of that duty. Towards the end of the Christmas Vacation Burne-Jones writes to Price, "Topsy has surrendered active powers as editor to Fulford, who is now to be autocratical master of the magazine, with full powers to accept or reject or modify anything or everything submitted to his imperial jurisdiction—it will be a good thing for all of us,

and a great relief to Topsy." The results of this arrangement on the fortunes of his venture are uncertain. On the one hand, the magazine became greatly overweighted with Fulford's own compositions both in prose and verse; yet without his energy, it may be doubtful whether the task of getting out a number somehow on the first of every month would ever have been accomplished. There was some idea, which however did not take effect, of having illustrations after the precedent set by Fraser's Magazine, and by the Pre-Raphaelite "Germ." An elaborately facetious drawing of "Faulkner's Improved Sewerage," designed by Burne-Jones for an article on Sanitation by Faulkner, is still extant: and Fulford writes in March, "I expect Edward will have an illustration in the Magazine in April." It was only the expense which stood in the way. As it was, the deficit on the year's accounts was several hundred pounds, all of which came out of Morris's pocket. The only illustrations issued in connexion with the magazine were two photographs of the medallion portraits by Woolner of Carlyle and Tennyson; and these were printed and sold separately.

The venture received slight, though not unfavourable, notices in the press; 750 copies of the first number were printed, and a further supply of 250 copies had to be added. But a large number of these were presentation copies, and the circulation of the succeeding numbers slowly fell off. At the end of the year there was a large stock of unsold copies on the publishers' shelves. But encouragement came from valued sources. Ruskin praised it warmly, and gave some sort of promise, which however was not carried out, to contribute to it. Fulford writes on the 9th of January, "Ruskin has sent a most jolly note to Jones,

promising to write for us when he has time, which won't be at present. But he is very despondent: he thinks people don't want honest criticism; and he has never known an honest journal get on yet." Among the contents of the January number was the first of a series of three articles on Tennyson's poetry by Fulford. He sent a copy to Tennyson and received a cordial acknowledgment.

"I find," Tennyson wrote to him, "in such of the articles as I have read, a truthfulness and earnestness very refreshing to me: very refreshing likewise is the use of the plain 'I' in lieu of the old hackneyed unconscientious editorial 'we.' May you go on and prosper. As to your essay on myself, you may easily see that I have some difficulty in speaking; to praise it, seeming too much like self-praise."

After the editorship was placed in Fulford's hands, Morris's own connexion with the management was confined to writing cheques; but he contributed articles, in prose or verse, to every number except those for June and November. "Topsy and I," Fulford writes in September, "are the only ones of the set that write at all regularly. Ted won't write." In deference to the wishes of certain contributors, I have thought it right not to give a full list of authors, which would otherwise be of no inconsiderable interest: the more so as all lists hitherto published are inaccurate in important particulars. Generally, however, it may be stated that two-thirds of the whole contents came from members of the Oxford Brotherhood. Beyond these, Wilfred Heeley was an important contributor to the earlier numbers; but he was married in September and went out to India soon afterwards, and so ceased to have connexion with it. Of the other writers, the only ones responsible for more than

a single article were Vernon Lushington, who had now left Cambridge and was studying law at the Temple; his brother Godfrey, recently elected Fellow of Oriel; and Bernard Cracroft, of Trinity College, Cambridge, who, like Vernon Lushington, was studying for the Bar, and afterwards became a statist and jurist of some distinction. He was one of the regular contributors to the Westminster Review under Mill, and the author of "Essays on Reform" and various other politico-social works. To these names, however, must be added that of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Three of his best-known poems appeared in the later numbers of the magazine: "The Burden of Nineveh" in August; "The Blessed Damozel" in November; and "The Staff and Scrip" in December. "The Blessed Damozel," a poem which, even more than the others, Rossetti kept perpetually retouching, is here printed with many variant readings, both from its original form in "The Germ" and from the later versions in the successive editions of his published volume of poems. The other two, which also vary materially in text from their later forms, were printed here for the first time.

There is little in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine which may not be read, even at this distance of time, with much interest: but except these poems of Rossetti's, Morris's own contributions represent, on the whole, that part of its contents which is of permanent value. "Topsy has got the real grit in him and no mistake. But we shall all go to Heaven. Now I call that rather good, a whole natural history in two sentences." So wrote one of the Brotherhood, in a flash of real insight, when seven numbers of the magazine had appeared. These contributions consist of eight prose tales, five poems, an article on Amiens Cathedral and another on two engravings by Alfred

Rethel, and a review of Browning's recently published "Men and Women." The article last named is, I believe, the single instance in which Morris ever voluntarily took the *rôle* of a reviewer; and together with an article on Rossetti's volume of poems of 1870, which, much against his will, he wrote for the "Academy," it represents the sum of his formal contributions to literary criticism.

The full list is as follows: the poems being distinguished by having their titles printed in italic.

January:	The Story of the Unknown Church. (A tale.)
	Winter Weather.
February:	The Churches of North France. No. 1. Shadows of Amiens.
March:	A Dream. (A tale.)
	"Men and Women." By Robert Browning.
April:	Frank's Sealed Letter. (A tale.)
May:	*Riding Together.*
July:	Gertha's Lovers. (A tale.) c. 1—3.
	Hands.
August:	"Death the Avenger and Death the Friend."
	Svend and his Brethren. (A tale.)
	Gertha's Lovers, c. 4, 5.
September:	Lindenborg Pool. (A tale.)
	The Hollow Land. (A tale.) c. 1, 2.
	The Chapel in Lyonness.
October:	The Hollow Land, c. 3.
	Pray but One Prayer for Me.
December:	Golden Wings. (A tale.)

"These early poems," Canon Dixon writes to me, "seem to me to be lifted out of poetry: to have, be-

sides poetry, a substance of visible beauty of one particular kind: to be poetry without any notion of being poetry, or effort, or aim at it." Four of them were included two years later in "The Defence of Guenevere," and require no further notice here; they are "Riding Together," "The Chapel in Lyonness," "Pray but One Prayer for Me" (there entitled "Summer Dawn"), and the Prince's Song in "Rapunzel," here printed separately under the title of "Hands." The fifth was omitted from that volume for some forgotten reason, perhaps because it was thought too like the famous "Riding Together." But to that poem it forms so perfect a pendant, and it is in itself of such strong and delicate beauty, that it claims rescue from oblivion.

We rode together
In the winter weather
  To the broad mead under the hill;
Though the skies did shiver
With the cold, the river
  Ran, and was never still.

No cloud did darken
The night; we did hearken
  The hound's bark far away.
It was solemn midnight
In that dread, dread night,
  In the years that have pass'd for aye.

Two rode beside me,
My banner did hide me,
  As it drooped adown from my lance;
With its deep blue trapping,
The mail over-lapping,
  My gallant horse did prance.

So ever together
In the sparkling weather
  Moved my banner and lance;
And its laurel trapping,
The steel over-lapping,
  The stars saw quiver and dance.

We met together
In the winter weather
By the town-walls under the hill;
His mail-rings came clinking,
They broke on my thinking,
For the night was hush'd and still.

Two rode beside him,
His banner did hide him,
As it drooped down strait from his lance;
With its blood-red trapping,
The mail over-lapping,
His mighty horse did prance.

And ever together
In the solemn weather
Moved his banner and lance;
And the holly trapping,
The steel over-lapping,
Did shimmer and shiver, and dance.

Back reined the squires
Till they saw the spires
Over the city wall;
Ten fathoms between us,
No dames could have seen us
Tilt from the city wall.

There we sat upright
Till the full midnight
Should be told from the city chimes;
Sharp from the towers
Leapt forth the showers
Of the many clanging rhymes.

'Twas the midnight hour,
Deep from the tower
Boom'd the following bell;
Down go our lances,
Shout for the lances!
The last toll was his knell.

There he lay, dying;
He had, for his lying,
A spear in his traitorous mouth;

A false tale made he
Of my true, true lady;
  But the spear went through his mouth.

In the winter weather
We rode back together
  From the broad mead under the hill;
And the cock sung his warning
As it grew toward morning,
  But the far-off hound was still.

Black grew his tower
As we rode down lower,
  Black from the barren hill;
And our horses strode
Up the winding road
  To the gateway dim and still.

At the gate of his tower,
In the quiet hour,
  We laid his body there;
But his helmet broken,
We took as a token;
  Shout for my lady fair!

We rode back together
In the winter weather
  From the broad mead under the hill;
No cloud did darken
The night; we did hearken
  How the hound bay'd from the hill.

In the article on Amiens Cathedral, which appeared in the February number, the intense love and wonderful knowledge Morris had of the Middle Ages, and of those glorious French Gothic churches which were always to him the crown and flower of the whole world's architecture, expressed themselves in what is perhaps even yet the noblest and most loving tribute ever paid to the great Cathedral. It was not written without violent struggles. "I am to have a grind about Amiens Cathedral this time," he writes from home on the 11th of January, "it is very poor and inadequate, I cannot

help it; it has cost me more trouble than anything I have written yet; I ground at it the other night from nine o'clock till half-past four a.m., when the lamp went out, and I had to creep upstairs to bed through the great dark house like a thief." The praise of Amiens has been written by many different pens; but no one has ever written on it with such white heat of enthusiasm and such wealth of detailed insight. Every word of what he writes comes straight from his heart. "I thought," he says, with simple and unashamed modesty, "that even if I could say nothing else about these grand churches, I could at least tell men how I loved them. For I will say here that I think these same churches of North France the grandest, the most beautiful, the kindest and most loving of all the buildings that the earth has ever borne."

This article is headed "The Churches of North France. No. 1." It would seem that Morris had meant to write a series of articles on these churches, but there is no trace of his having begun a second. Indeed, after the first few months, his contributions to the magazine appear to be mainly poems and tales written during the previous year; his work at Street's office, together with all the rest of his activities, preventing him from giving the laborious days and nights to writing which would have been necessary. For the essay on Amiens has neither the fluent grace nor the uncertain touch of the tales; it is wrought as if with chisel strokes, precise and yet passionate. The prose tales, on the other hand, were written very swiftly, poured out, as it were, from a brain overloaded and saturated with its pent-up stores of imagination. The only one which bears internal traces of labour or effort is the one entitled "Frank's Sealed Letter," in which for once, and with very faint success, he tried to write

a story of modern life. In common with the unfinished and unpublished modern novel which he wrote many years afterwards, it gives the curious impression of some one writing about a kind of life which he only knows from books, with a strange sort of inverted antiquarianism. Put him in the thirteenth century and he is completely and conspicuously at his ease; the pictures rise, the narrative flows, as though he had seen and heard all he describes. But once in the nineteenth, his imagination is clogged and half crippled. On the imaginative side he was far behind, and far before, his own time: he belongs partly to the earlier Middle Ages, and partly to an age still far in the future. The stories of "The Unknown Church" and "Lindenborg Pool" have what may be called a semi-historical setting; they are placed, that is, in a definite European country and in a more or less definite epoch. But in the other five tales, the flower of Morris's early work, the world is one of pure romance. Mediæval customs, mediæval buildings, the mediæval Catholic religion, the general social framework of the thirteenth or fourteenth century, are assumed throughout, but it would be idle to attempt to place them in any known age or country. The world of fantasy in which they are set is like and yet unlike that of the second cycle of prose tales which began more than thirty years later, when he abandoned the semi-historical setting of "John Ball" and "The House of the Wolfings" and returned to a world of pure romance in the story of "The Roots of the Mountains" and the series of stories which followed it. Both worlds are vaguely mediæval, but the men and women who move in these earlier tales are less strong and more passionate; and the world itself is more opulent, more Southern, reminding one often of Provence or Italy rather than of the rich but temperate Northern

lands dwelt in by the men of Burgdale or Upmeads or Utterhay. The Muse of the North had not yet become to him what it was in later years, "Mother, and Love, and Sister all in one," as he calls it in a poem written about ten years after this. The tale of "Lindenborg Pool" is indeed suggested by a story in Thorpe's "Northern Mythology," and "The Hollow Land" is headed by a few lines from the Niebelungenlied; but the atmosphere is throughout that of the French romances, not that of the Scandinavian epic. Another likeness between the two cycles of stories is the skilful interweaving of prose and verse, afterwards adopted by him as a conscious literary method in "The House of the Wolfings" and "The Well at the World's End." Among these early romances are several exquisite lyrical fragments. One of these, the song sung by Margaret in "The Hollow Land," has passed from mouth to mouth among many lovers of poetry who never read the romance itself:

Christ keep the Hollow Land
All the summer-tide;
Still we cannot understand
Where the waters glide;

Only dimly seeing them
Coldly slipping through
Many green-lipp'd cavern mouths,
Where the hills are blue.

The first verse of another fragment in the same story, a Christmas carol heard sung in the snow by a sentinel of Queen Swanhilda's, was perpetually repeated among his friends; nor is it easy to forget after a single hearing:

Queen Mary's crown was gold,
King Joseph's crown was red,
But Jesus' crown was diamond
That lit up all the bed
Mariæ Virginis.

Ships sail through the Heaven
With red banners dress'd,
Carrying the planets seven
To see the white breast
Mariæ Virginis.

These romances have never been reprinted. Their author in later years thought, or seemed to think, lightly of them, calling them crude (as they are) and very young (as they are). But they are nevertheless comparable in quality to Keats's "Endymion": as rich in imagination, as irregularly gorgeous in language, as full in every vein and fibre of the sweet juices and ferment of the spring.

Towards the end of the Christmas Vacation of 1855-6, when the first number of the magazine had just been launched on the world, Burne-Jones went for a few days to London; and there an event took place which had momentous consequences in the year which ensued on his own life and that of Morris. The story shall be given in his own words.

"Just after Christmas, I went to London, to visit my aunt. I was two and twenty, and had never met, or even seen, a painter in my life. I knew no one who had ever seen one, or had been in a studio, and of all men who lived on earth, the one that I wanted to see was Rossetti. I had no dream of ever knowing him, but I wanted to look at him, and as I had heard that he taught at the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street, a little University set up by Denison Maurice, where men skilled in science or history gave lectures and their services of evenings, I went to the college one day to find out how it would be possible that I should set eyes upon him. I was told that there was to be a monthly meeting that very evening, in a room in Great Titchfield Street, and that, by pay-

ing threepence, any one could get admittance, including tea, and hear the addresses on the condition of the college, and the advance of studies, which were delivered by the different professors; so without fail I was there, and sat at a table and had thick bread and butter, but knowing no one. But good fellowship was the rule there, that was clear; and a man sitting opposite to me spoke at once to me, introducing himself by the name of Furnivall, and I gave my name and college, and my reason for coming. He reached across the table to a kindly-looking man, whom he introduced to me as Vernon Lushington, to whom I repeated my reason for coming, and begged him to tell me when Rossetti entered the room. It seemed that it was doubtful if he would appear at all, that he was constant in his work of teaching drawing at the College, but had no great taste for the nights of addresses and speeches, and as I must have looked downcast at this, Lushington, with a kindness never to be forgotten by me, invited me to go to his rooms in Doctors' Commons a few nights afterwards, where Rossetti had promised to come. So I waited a good hour or two, listening to speeches about the progress of the College, and Maurice, who was President, spoke of Macaulay's new volume, just out, blaming much the attack on George Fox in a true Carlylese spirit which was very pleasing, and then Lushington whispered to me that Rossetti had come in, and so I saw him for the first time, his face satisfying all my worship, and I listened to addresses no more, but had my fill of looking; only I would not be introduced to him. You may be sure I sent a long letter about all this to Morris at Walthamstow, and on the night appointed, about ten o'clock, I went to Lushington's rooms, where was a company of men, some of whom have been friends ever since. I

remember Saffi was there, and a brother of Rossetti's. And by-and-bye Rossetti came and I was taken up to him and had my first fearful talk with him. Browning's 'Men and Women' had just been published a few days before, and some one speaking disrespectfully of that book was rent in pieces at once for his pains and was dumb for the rest of the evening, so that I saw my hero could be a tyrant, and I thought it sat finely upon him. Also, another unwary man professed an interest in metaphysics; he also was dealt with firmly; so that our host was impelled to ask if Rossetti would have all men painters, and if there should be no other occupation for mankind. Rossetti said stoutly that it was so. But before I left that night, Rossetti bade me come to his studio next day. It was at the top of the last house by Blackfriars Bridge, at the north-west corner of the bridge, long ago pulled down to make way for the Embankment; and I found him painting at a water-colour of a monk copying a mouse in an illumination. The picture was called 'Fra Pace' afterwards, and belongs now to Mrs. Jekyll. He received me very courteously, and asked much about Morris, one or two of whose poems he knew already, and I think that was our principal subject of talk, for he seemed much interested about him. He showed me many designs for pictures; they tossed about everywhere in the room: the floor at one end was covered with them and with books. No books were on shelves, and I remember long afterwards he once said that books were no use to a painter except to prop up models upon in difficult positions, and that then they might be very useful. No one seemed to be in attendance upon him. I stayed long and watched him at work, not knowing till many a day afterwards that this was a thing he greatly hated, and when, for shame, I

could stay no longer, I went away, having carefully concealed from him the desire I had to be a painter."

After this vacation, Burne-Jones returned to Oxford, more confirmed than ever in his resolution of becoming a painter at once. During the Lent term he continued to read for the Final Schools; but at Easter he went up to London permanently, and left college without taking a degree. Meanwhile Morris had, on the 21st of January, signed his articles with Street and begun work in Street's office in Beaumont Street, living himself in lodgings in St. Giles's, in a house opposite St. John's. Street's senior clerk was then Philip Webb, a man a few years older than Morris. Between them there arose a close and lifelong friendship. When Webb left Street's office in 1859 his place was taken by Norman Shaw. It is hardly too much to say that the work of these three men has, in the course of a generation, revolutionized domestic architecture throughout England.

Morris plunged with his usual ardour and thoroughness into his new profession. His single holiday for several months was on the day when he took his Bachelor's degree. The evenings during term were, as before, spent with the old set, who were still in residence, with the exception of Fulford, now installed in London as editor of the magazine and literary man. "Edward says," writes Miss Price in February, "that Fulford has become very serious." Browning's "Bishop Blougram," published in the previous year, was one of the poems which were eagerly discussed by the set about this time. Emigration to Australia or New Zealand was then greatly in the air as a sort of gospel. Madox Brown's picture, "The Last of England," painted between the years 1852 and 1855, marks the culmination of the movement. It already appears

strongly marked in the conclusion of Clough's "Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich," published in 1848. Woolner had actually gone to Australia in 1852, and Tennyson had had serious thoughts of accompanying him. The arousal caused by the Crimean War united with other causes to check the impulse; and work for the elevation and sweetening of life in England took the place in the ideals of younger men that had for a few years been occupied by the somewhat fantastic dreams of an Antipodean Golden World.

In his spare time, besides the poems and stories which he went on pouring forth, Morris was beginning to practise more than one handicraft—clay-modelling, carving in wood and stone, and illuminating. A page of his illumination is extant, done in this year. It shows great certainty and mastery in colour, but not the complete grasp of the art which he had acquired a year later; the drawing is uncertain, and the writing not good. His eye for colour was always perfect, and his knowledge with regard to it amazing. There is a singular instance of this in a passage in "The Hollow Land." "As the years went on," says the Son of the House of the Lilies, "and we grew old, we painted purple pictures and green ones instead of the scarlet and yellow, so that the walls looked altered." That this is what actually happens from the yellowing of the crystalline lens of the eye in advanced life was only discovered by specialists many years later. How did Morris know, or divine it?

From the day he put on his Bachelor's gown, he ceased the practice, then still enforced on all undergraduates, of shaving the moustache. From that time forward he never touched a razor; and now also he began, partly as a symbol of his profession, partly from mere disinclination to take unnecessary trouble, to wear

his hair long, as was then the fashion among artists. His hair remained through life of extraordinary beauty, very thick, fine and strong, with a beautiful curl that made it look like exquisitely wrought metal, and with no parting. It was so strong that he afterwards used to amuse his children by letting them take hold of it and lifting them by it off the ground. His general appearance at this time—the massive head, the slightly knitted brow, the narrow eyeslits and heavy underlids, the delicately beautiful mouth and chin only half veiled by the slight beard—are given with great fidelity in a photograph of about this period which is reproduced here, and which also shows the characteristic hands—broad, fleshy, and rather short, with a look about them of clumsiness and ineffectiveness which was absolutely the reverse of the truth. It was a perpetual amazement to see those hands executing the most delicately minute work with a swiftness and precision that no one else could equal. Another portrait of him at this time of his life exists which many people have seen without knowing it. In Rossetti's drawing of Lancelot leaning over the barge of the Lady of Shalott, in the illustrated Tennyson published in 1857 by Moxon and often since reprinted, Lancelot's head was drawn from Morris and was an admirable likeness. In spite of the imperfection of the woodcutting, which in this, as in the other illustrations that Rossetti contributed to the volume, drove him almost to despair, in spite, too, of the cap which almost conceals the forehead and hair, this head remains, by the account of his early friends, an exact portrait of the man they knew.

After Burne-Jones went to London at Easter, and began painting under the friendly guidance of Rossetti, Morris used to go up almost every week to spend the Sunday with him at his lodgings in Chelsea. He used

to arrive on Saturday in time to see pictures at the Academy or elsewhere, and go to a play with Burne-Jones and Rossetti in the evening. After the play—if Rossetti's imperious impatience of bad acting or bad plays allowed them to sit it out—they would go with him to his rooms on the Embankment overlooking Blackfriars Bridge, and sit there till three or four in the morning, talking. All Sunday the talking, varied by reading of the "Morte d'Arthur," went on in the Chelsea lodging, Rossetti often looking in upon the other two in the afternoon. On the Monday morning, Morris took the first train down to Oxford to be at Street's again when the office opened. During these months Rossetti's influence over him grew stronger and stronger. His doctrine that everybody should be a painter, enforced with all the weight of his immense personality and an eloquence and plausibility in talk which all who knew him in those years describe as unparalleled in their experience, carried Morris for a time off his feet. Much, no doubt, of the daily work in an architect's office was in itself uninteresting, or even distasteful to him; and if the statement in Street's "Life," that, while his headquarters were at Oxford, he "restored most of the Oxford churches," be taken in anything like a literal sense, the work must sometimes have been such as Morris, with his clear views on the subject of restorations, could not assist in with any comfort, or look forward to without an alarm almost amounting to disgust as the future business of his own life. He became an ardent pupil, as he was already a keen admirer, of the Pre-Raphaelite school. Rossetti introduced him to Madox Brown and Holman Hunt, and painting rose for a time almost, if not quite, to the first place in his interest. On one of his visits to London he fell in love with, and bought, Mr. Arthur

Hughes's beautiful "April Love," which was exhibited at the Royal Academy that year, together with Hunt's "Scapegoat," Millais's "Autumn Leaves," and Wallis's "Death of Chatterton."

At the end of this summer, Street removed his headquarters from Oxford to London, and Morris came up with him. In August he and Burne-Jones took rooms together in Upper Gordon Street, Bloomsbury, a neighbourhood convenient to both as being close both to Street's office in Montague Place and to the various drawing schools known under the generic name of Gandish's in the neighbourhood of Fitzroy Square. Some extracts from a letter written from Oxford in July may show the ferment working in his brain.

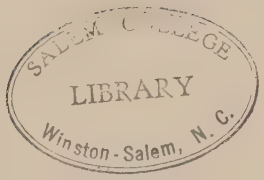
"I have seen Rossetti twice since I saw the last of you; spent almost a whole day with him the last time, last Monday, that was. Hunt came in while we were there, a tallish, slim man with a beautiful red beard, somewhat of a turn-up nose, and deep-set dark eyes: a beautiful man. . . . Rossetti says I ought to paint, he says I shall be able; now as he is a very great man, and speaks with authority and not as the scribes, I *must* try. I don't hope much, I must say, yet will try my best—he gave me practical advice on the subject. . . . So I am going to try, not giving up the architecture, but trying if it is possible to get six hours a day for drawing besides office work. One won't get much enjoyment out of life at this rate, I know well, but that don't matter: I have no right to ask for it at all events —love and work, these two things only. . . . I can't enter into politico-social subjects with any interest, for on the whole I see that things are in a muddle, and I have no power or vocation to set them right in ever so little a degree. My work is the embodiment of dreams in one form or another. . . .

"Yet I shall have enough to do, if I actually master this art of painting: I dare scarcely think failure possible at times, and yet I know in my mind that my chances are slender; I am glad that I am compelled to try anyhow; I was slipping off into a kind of small (very small) Palace of Art. . . . Ned and I are going to live together. I go to London early in August."

The double life which he proposes to himself in this letter was actually carried on for some time, Morris working at Street's office in the day and going with Burne-Jones to a life school in Newman Street at night. But it of course proved to be impossible as a continuance. A visit to the Low Countries which he made during the autumn with Street brought him back fired with new enthusiasm for painting; and before the end of the year he finally quitted the office. It was after this visit that he adopted, or modified, for his own use, the motto "Als ich kanne" of John Van Eyck.

"Topsy and I live together," writes Burne-Jones in August, "in the quaintest room in all London, hung with brasses of old knights and drawings of Albert Dürer. We know Rossetti now as a daily friend, and we know Browning too, who is the greatest poet alive, and we know Arthur Hughes, and Woolner, and Madox Brown—Madox Brown is a lark! I asked him the other day if I wasn't very old to begin painting, and he said, 'Oh, no! there was a man I knew who began older; by the bye, he cut his throat the other day,' so I ask no more about men who begin late. Topsy will be a painter, he works hard, is prepared to wait twenty years, loves art more and more every day. He has written several poems, exceedingly dramatic—the Brownings, I hear, have spoken very highly of one that was read to them; Rossetti thinks one called

'Rapunzel' is equal to Tennyson: he is now illuminating 'Guendolen' for Georgie. . . . The Mag. is going to smash—let it go! the world is not converted and never will be. It has had stupid things in it lately. I shall not write again for it, no more will Topsy—we cannot do more than one thing at a time, and our hours are too valuable to spend so."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CHAPTER IV

RED LION SQUARE: THE OXFORD UNION: THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE

1857-1859

THE formal abandonment of architecture as a profession which took place under Rossetti's influence at the end of 1856 was not felt either by Morris himself or by his friends to be a light matter. Rossetti, now as always perfectly unscrupulous in his means towards an end which he believed to be of primary importance, probably did not look beyond the immediate interests of his own art. For him, at that time, English society was divided into two classes. The duty of the one class was to paint pictures, and it included all those who were competent to do so. The duty of the other class was to buy the pictures so painted. This amazingly simple scheme of life he enforced with all the power of his bewitching personality. To an immense power of humour and sarcasm, and a dazzling eloquence, he added gifts even more potent: an intelligence of sympathy towards the ideas or work of other artists, which Sir Edward Burne-Jones in recent years described as unequalled in his experience; a boundless generosity in helping on younger men who would be guided by him; and behind all these qualities, a

certain hard intellectual force against which very few of those who came under its influence were able to make a stand. When Morris was introduced to Rossetti he was already known among his friends, and must have already known himself, to be a poet. Yet in Rossetti's judgment, even poetry, of which he was himself so eminent a master, was to be subordinated to painting whenever that was possible. In 1854 he had written to Allingham, "I believe my poetry and painting prevented each other from doing much good for a long while, and now I think I could do better in either, but can't write, for then I shan't paint." It was a theory of his, expounded with copiousness and vehement conviction, that English poetry was fast reaching the termination of its long and splendid career, and that Keats represented its final achievement. English painting, on the other hand, he regarded as in its dawn. To the enthusiasm of the Pre-Raphaelites all possibilities seemed to lie before them in their newly-revived art; and Rossetti made it his business to preach and proselytize for this new art as the one thing then and there needful. Writing to William Bell Scott in February, 1857, he says, "Two young men, projectors of the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine, have recently come to town from Oxford and are now very intimate friends of mine. Their names are Morris and Jones. They have turned artists instead of taking up any other career to which the University generally leads, and both are men of real genius. Jones's designs are models of finish and imaginative detail, unequalled by anything unless, perhaps, Albert Dürer's finest works; and Morris, though without practice as yet, has no less power, I fancy. He has written some really wonderful poetry, too." But the poetry was to his mind in the second

place. "If any man has any poetry in him," he said to Burne-Jones again and again that summer, "he should paint, for it has all been said and written, and they have scarcely begun to paint it." The feeling which Morris had shared with his contemporaries at Oxford, that Tennyson represented the end of all things in poetry, no doubt received a powerful stimulus or revival from this doctrine of Rossetti's; and perhaps the curious view which he always continued to hold of writing poetry as a recreation, an enjoyment to be taken in the intervals of some manual work, was in some measure due to the persistence of this influence.

To his mother, at all events, who had so short a time before been reluctantly reconciled to his becoming an architect, the change of profession came as a severe shock: the more so, that with characteristic vehemence, he did not prepare her mind for it, but announced it with a nervous suddenness while he and Burne-Jones were on a visit to Walthamstow. She never quite forgave Burne-Jones for what she naturally thought was mainly his doing. On Morris himself the resolution had an unsettling, and for a time, almost a disastrous effect. For the two years or so during which he worked hard at painting, he was moody and irritable; he brooded much by himself, and lost for the time a good deal of his old sweetness and affectionateness of manner. Rossetti's conquest of a mind so strong and so self-sufficing was, while it lasted, complete in proportion to the strength which was subdued. He became not only a pupil, but a servant. Once, when Burne-Jones complained that the designs he made in Rossetti's manner seemed better than his own original work, Morris answered with some vehemence, "I have got beyond that: I want to imi-

tate Gabriel as much as I can." The new gospel was carried down to those of the set who still remained at Oxford, and they were all put to drawing or modelling as if their life depended on it.

When Morris ceased to be all day at Street's office, the lodgings in Upper Gordon Street became inadequate for both him and Burne-Jones to work in. They were also rather expensive. Burne-Jones was poor; and Morris, while he was under Rossetti's guidance, had to buy pictures as well as paint them. "Yesterday," runs an entry in Madox Brown's diary for the 24th of August, 1856, "Rossetti brought his ardent admirer Morris of Oxford, who bought my little Hayfield for £40." Just then the rooms at 17, Red Lion Square, which Rossetti and Deverell had occupied in the early days of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, happened to be vacant; and at Rossetti's suggestion, they removed there. It was a first floor set of three rooms: the large room in front looked north, and its window had been heightened up to the ceiling to adapt it for use as a studio; behind it was a bedroom, and behind that another small bedroom or powdering closet. Till the spring of 1859 this was their London residence and working place, and it is round Red Lion Square that much of the mythology of Morris's earlier life clusters. From the incidents which occurred or were invented there, a sort of Book of the Hundred Merry Tales gradually was formed, of which Morris was the central figure. A great many of these stories are connected with the maid of the house, who became famous under the name of Red Lion Mary. She was very plain, but a person of great character and unfailing good humour, with some literary taste and a considerable knowledge of poetry. She cooked and mended for the new

lodgers, read their books and letters, was anxious to be allowed to act as a model, and neglected all her other duties to stand behind them and watch them painting.

The rooms in Red Lion Square were unfurnished: and from this trifling circumstance came the beginnings of Morris's work as a decorator and manufacturer. The arts of cabinet-making and upholstery had at this time reached the lowest point to which they have ever sunk. Ugliness and vulgarity reigned in them unchecked. While he lived in furnished rooms it was easy to accept things as they were; but now, when furniture had actually to be bought, it became at once clear that nothing could be had that was beautiful, or indeed, that was not actively hideous. Nor was it possible even to get so simple a thing as a table or chair, still less any more elaborate piece of furniture, made at the furnishing shops from a better design. It was this state of things which drove Morris and Webb to take up the designing and making of objects of common use on their own account, and which led, a few years later, to the formation of the firm of Morris & Company. For the moment, however, all that was possible was that Morris should make rough drawings of the things he most wanted, and then get a carpenter in the neighbourhood to construct them from those drawings in plain deal. Thus the rooms in Red Lion Square were gradually provided with "intensely mediæval furniture," as Rossetti described it, "tables and chairs like incubi and succubi." First came a large round table "as firm, and as heavy, as a rock": then some large chairs, equally firm, and not lightly to be moved, "such as Barbarossa might have sat in." Afterwards a large settle was designed, with a long seat below, and above, three cupboards with great swing doors.

"There were many scenes with the carpenter," Sir Edward Burne-Jones says: "especially I remember the night when the settle came home. We were out when it reached the house, but when we came in, all the passages and the staircase were choked with vast blocks of timber, and there was a scene. I think the measurements had perhaps been given a little wrongly, and that it was bigger altogether than he had ever meant, but set up it was finally, and our studio was one-third less in size. Rossetti came. This was always a terrifying moment to the very last. He laughed, but approved." Not only so, but he at once made designs for oil paintings to be executed on the panels of the cupboard doors and the sides of the settle. The design for the central panel, Love between the Sun and Moon, was only executed later; but the painting of the two others was completed during this winter: and these panels, afterwards removed from the cupboard, are now known as the Meeting of Dante and Beatrice in Florence, and their Meeting in Paradise. On the backs of two of the large heavy chairs he also painted subjects from Morris's own poems; these panels, one representing Guendolen in the witch-tower and the Prince below kissing her long golden hair, and the other the arming of a knight, from the Christmas Mystery of "Sir Galahad," are also extant. The theory that furniture should mainly exist to provide spaces for pictorial decoration was carried in these chairs to an extreme limit. But the next piece of furniture required for the rooms was a wardrobe; and this, covered by Burne-Jones in the spring of 1857 with paintings from "The Prioress's Tale" in Chaucer, remained to the last the principal ornament of Morris's drawing-room in London, and is familiar to all his later as well as his older friends.

Morris himself worked hard at drawing and painting all that spring. His wonderful faculty of pattern designing had already come to him, and with it a unique sense for justness in colour, fed on admiring study of the best early mediæval work, especially in illumination. "In all illumination and work of that kind," Rossetti writes just before Christmas, 1856, "he is quite unrivalled by anything modern that I know." In the drawing and modelling of animate forms he never could become proficient. The human figure was too much for him, and even with birds or animals in his designs he felt difficulty. So it remained afterwards. The animals in his wall-papers were, as a rule, drawn by Webb, and the figures in his tapestries by Burne-Jones; and many years later, when designing the borders for the Kelmscott Chaucer, he expressed his regret at not being able to fill them with Chaucer's favourite birds. Such figures as he designed, of which there are a number both in illuminations and in stained glass, are obviously faulty in drawing.

In June, Rossetti, writing to W. Bell Scott, mentions Morris as then busy painting his first picture. Its subject, taken from the "Morte d'Arthur," was the recognition of Tristram by the dog in King Mark's palace. This, like the few other pictures he completed, was in oil. The only recorded instance of his painting a picture in water-colour was three or four months later, when he was on a visit to Dixon at Manchester to see the famous Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857. While staying there he painted a water-colour of "The Soldan's Daughter in the Palace of Glass." The Soldan's daughter was seated in a heavy wooden armchair, probably studied from one of those at Red Lion Square, and the palace was in all shades of bluish glass. To the pictures in the Manchester Exhibition

he seemed to pay little attention, but studied the collection of carved ivories minutely. The visit ended with a very characteristic scene. "When he was to go," Canon Dixon says, "we both, I think, misread the Railway Guide, and drove to the station when there was no train; and there was nothing for it but to wait till next day. I was made aware of this by a fearful cry in my ears, and saw Morris 'translated': it lasted all the way home; it then vanished in a moment; he was as calm as if it had never been, and began painting in water-colours." It was during this visit to Manchester that he wrote the "Praise of My Lady," with the lovely Latin burden, which is one of the jewels of the volume of Poems of 1858.

Mrs. Alfred Baldwin possesses another work of the same period, which Morris gave her when a girl in London during that winter. It is a page of illuminated manuscript on vellum. The text, which is in prose, is founded on a fairy tale from Grimm. The writing, which is in the Gothic character, is rather cramped and uncertain. But the design and colouring of the border, and the treatment of a picture in a large initial letter, show a complete grasp of the principles and methods of the art. It is probable that no illumination had been done since the fifteenth century which was so full of the mediæval spirit.

A holiday during this Red Lion Square time was nearly always spent at the Zoological Gardens. For the greater birds Morris had always a special affection. He would imitate an eagle with considerable skill and humour, climbing on to a chair and, after a sullen pause, coming down with a soft heavy flop; and for some time an owl was one of the tenants of Red Lion Square, in spite of a standing feud between it and Rossetti. The evenings were pretty often spent at

the theatre, seeing Robson at the Olympic, or Kean's Shakespearean pageants at the Princess's. Among all this series of spectacular plays, "Richard the Second" (March to July, 1857) was Morris's special favourite. For the beautiful fluency and copiousness of the language in this play he had an immense admiration; and in Kean's production there was a dance with mediæval music which gave him great delight. It was his first, or almost his first, introduction to early non-ecclesiastical music. When all the rest of the day's work or amusement was over, there were gatherings at Rossetti's rooms in Chatham Place, beginning about midnight and often lasting far into the morning.

How long Rossetti's daily influence might have kept him labouring at what he could not do, when there was work all round that he could do, on the whole, better than any man living, it is needless to inquire. But the first piece of work which took him away from life in a painter's studio, and began his career as a decorator, was of Rossetti's own initiation.

In the early part of the Long Vacation of 1857, Rossetti went down to Oxford to see his friend Benjamin Woodward, the architect. Morris, always delighted to take a day at Oxford, went with him. The long battle between the Palladian and Gothic styles for the new University Museum had been at last decided by the Oxford authorities in favour of the latter. Woodward's plans, in a style of mixed Rhenish and Venetian Gothic, had been accepted, and the museum was now in progress. Besides his principal work at the museum, he was engaged in building a debating hall for the Union Society. That hall, now the principal library, was just roofed in. In form, the hall was a long building with apsidal ends. A narrow

gallery fitted with bookshelves ran completely round it, and above the shelves was a broad belt of wall divided into ten bays, pierced by twenty six-foil circular windows, and surmounted by an open timber roof. Rossetti was at once fired with the idea of painting the space thus given. In his notions of the application of painting to architectural surfaces, Woodward, an ardent admirer and a skilled imitator of the Venetian builders, cordially concurred; and it was at once settled that the ten bays and the whole of the ceiling should be covered with painting in tempera. The Building Committee of the Union, who had a general discretion as regards the work to be done during the Long Vacation, were induced to authorize the work without waiting to refer the matter to a general meeting of the Society. It was arranged that the paintings should forthwith be designed and carried out under Rossetti's superintendence. He himself, and other artists whom he should invite to join him, were to be the executants. The Union was to defray the expense of scaffolding and materials, and the travelling and lodging expenses of the artists, who, beyond this, were to give their services for nothing. No sooner was this settled, than Rossetti went straight back to London and issued his orders: Burne-Jones and Morris were to lay aside all other work and start on the new scheme at once. He had it all planned in his mind. The ten paintings on the walls were to be a series of scenes from the "Morte d'Arthur," and the roof above them was to be covered with a floriated design. For the pictures, ten men had to be found, each of whom should execute one bay, and the work, in the first enthusiasm, was estimated as a matter of six weeks or so. Arthur Hughes, Spencer Stanhope, Val Prinsep, and Hungerford Pollen, were drawn into

the scheme and agreed to take a picture each ; Madox Brown was also asked to execute one, but declined. Rossetti undertook to do two, or if possible three, himself, and Morris and Burne-Jones were each to do one under his eye and with his guidance : eight or nine of the ten bays were thus accounted for, and the remainder of the space was for the moment left to chance.

The story of these paintings, of which the mouldering and undecipherable remains still glimmer like faded ghosts on the walls of the Union Library, is one of work hastily undertaken, executed under impossible conditions, and finally abandoned after time and labour had been spent on it quite disproportionate to the original design. A scheme of mural decoration which was practically new in England, and which involved the most careful preparation and the most complete forethought, was rushed into with a light heart ; all difficulties were ignored, and many of the most obvious precautions neglected. None of the painters engaged in it had then any practical knowledge of the art of mural painting, nor do they seem to have thought that any kind of colour could not be applied to any kind of surface. The tradition of the art of fresco painting was then so wholly lost that paintings in distemper on a naked wall were commonly spoken of as frescoes, and were expected to last as a fresco painting would. The walls were newly built, and the mortar still damp. Each of the spaces to be painted over was pierced by two circular windows, and the effect on the design as well as on the lighting of the pictures may be imagined. No ground whatever was laid over the brickwork except a coat of whitewash : and on this the colour was to be laid with a small brush, like water-colour on paper.

Morris set to work with his usual energy. Before either of the others had made a design, he was in Oxford and had begun his painting. Presently Rossetti and Burne-Jones joined him there, and for the rest of the vacation they lived together in lodgings in the High Street, in a house now pulled down to make room for the new Schools. The other four painters came later, and the work, at first carried on with happy diligence through long hours day after day, became more intermittent as winter advanced, and trailed on into the following spring. Morris's was the first picture finished as it had been the first begun. The subject was one for which he felt a singular and almost a morbid attraction, that of the unsuccessful man and despised lover. The motive was the same which he had treated in prose a year before in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine with many details which were directly taken from his own life. It was entitled "How Sir Palomydes loved La Belle Iseult with exceeding great love out of measure, and how she loved not him again but rather Sir Tristram." All of it that now traceably survives is the faded gleam of sunflowers with which part of the foreground was covered. On the profusion of these sunflowers Rossetti was a little sarcastic, and suggested that he should help another of the painters out of difficulties by filling up the foreground of that bay with scarlet-runners. But no sooner had Morris finished his picture than he set to work with fresh animation and with triumphant success on the decoration of the roof. The design for this was made in a single day, and surprised all the rest of the painters by its singular beauty and fitness. All the rest of the autumn he was working on the roof high over the heads of the others, carrying out the greater part of the decoration with his own hands.

But Faulkner, now Fellow and Mathematical Tutor of University, came pretty regularly in the afternoons to help. "Charley comes out tremendously strong on the roof with all kinds of quaint beasts and birds," Burne-Jones wrote home in October. After term began, Price and others were impressed to assist as they came up. "I worked with him," Canon Dixon tells me, "on his picture of the famous sunflowers for several days, and was pleased to hear him say that it was improved." The day's work began at eight o'clock and went on as long as daylight lasted. "If we needed models," Sir Edward Burne-Jones writes, "we sat to each other, and Morris had a head always fit for Lancelot or Tristram. For the purposes of our drawing we often needed armour, and of a date and design so remote that no examples existed for our use. Therefore Morris, whose knowledge of all these things seemed to have been born in him, and who never at any time needed books of reference for anything, set to work to make designs for an ancient kind of helmet called a basinet, and for a great surcoat of ringed mail with a hood of mail and the skirt coming below the knees. These were made for him by a stout little smith who had a forge near the Castle. Morris's visits to the forge were daily, but what scenes happened there we shall never know; the encounters between these two workmen were always stubborn and angry as far as I could see. One afternoon when I was working high up at my picture, I heard a strange bellowing in the building, and turning round to find the cause, saw an unwonted sight. The basinet was being tried on, but the visor, for some reason, would not lift, and I saw Morris embedded in iron, dancing with rage and roaring inside. The mail coat came in due time, and was so satisfactory to its designer

that the first day it came he chose to dine in it. It became him well; he looked very splendid. When it lay in coils on the ground, one could lift it with great difficulty, but once put on the body its weight was so evenly ordered that it was less uncomfortable than any top coat I ever wore. I have the basinet still, and the sword that was made by the same smith."

The decoration of the roof was finished early in November. But Morris did not leave Oxford, and for the next year or more lived chiefly there, in the rooms at 17, George Street, which the painters had taken when they had to turn out of their lodgings in High Street at the beginning of the autumn term. Burne-Jones, when he had finished his picture of "The Death of Merlin," returned to Red Lion Square, where he lived practically alone till spring, though his visits to Oxford and Morris's to London were almost weekly.

The decoration of the Union involves so many famous names, and is in itself of such interest as one of the earliest attempts of the sort made in modern times, that a brief digression may be pardonable to set down the rest of the story. From the first, there was a feeling among many members of the Union that the scheme had been rushed on them by Rossetti and Woodward. The latter, "the stillest creature that ever breathed out of an oyster shell," as Rossetti called him, had apparently been talked over by Rossetti into allowing the work to be begun without obtaining proper sanction. The question was raised at a debate on the 26th of October, 1857, when the Treasurer, Charles Bowen of Balliol (afterwards Lord Bowen), admitted that an irregularity had been committed, and the subject was allowed to drop. A week later, however, a motion was carried unanimously "thanking the

gentlemen who had kindly and liberally undertaken to decorate the new building, and expressing appreciation of the valuable works of art in course of completion." The names mentioned specially were those of Rossetti and Hughes, "with some of their friends." Later in term all the seven painters engaged on the work, together with Alexander Munro the sculptor, who was executing a relief in stone, from Rossetti's design, for the tympanum over the doorway, were elected honorary members, and a loan of £350 was sanctioned to meet the expense of the work. By the following spring six of the pictures had been completed: the seventh, Rossetti's own, "Sir Lancelot's Vision of the Sangrail," had been broken off when he was called to London by the dangerous illness of Miss Siddal, and was never resumed by him. Even in its unfinished condition it was by far the finest and most masterly of the series. "It belonged," says Sir Edward Burne-Jones, "to the best time and highest character of his work." In this design, Lancelot lay asleep against a well on the right hand of the picture: the Vision of the Grail carried by angels moved along opposite him; and in the centre, a phantom Guenevere stood with outstretched arms in front of an apple tree. The figures are perished quite beyond recognition: but a drawing made for that of the sleeping Lancelot is one of the earliest portraits of Burne-Jones. The other two pictures which Rossetti had designed had for subjects "Lancelot found in Guenevere's Chamber," and "The Three Knights of the Sangrail." A pen and ink sketch of the former, dated 1857, is in the possession of Mr. C. F. Murray. The small water-colour of the latter, painted several years afterwards and now in Mr. Heaton's collection, perhaps gives a better idea than anything else of the method used in the Union

paintings, and also of the extraordinary brilliance of the colouring, nearly all in radiant greens and reds and blues. But the execution of these two pictures was never even begun; and after March, 1858, no more work was done either by Rossetti or by any other of the artists engaged. A committee then appointed, after certain communications with Rossetti, of which no record is preserved, took the matter into their own hands, and in June, 1859, Mr. William Riviere, the father of the well-known Academician, who had just left Cheltenham to become a teacher of painting in Oxford, was engaged to fill the three vacant bays, and a sum of £150 voted for his payment.

The impossible conditions under which the work was performed have already been mentioned. The brick-work on which the painting was executed was not damp-proof; the edges of the bricks caught all the floating dust; the colour partly sank in and partly flaked off; and to crown the whole, the hall was lit by naked gas-flames in large chandeliers, the smoke and heat of which went straight up on to the painting. William Bell Scott, who went to see them in June, 1858, when they had not been six months completed, speaks of them as being even then much defaced, in Morris's own picture little else appearing plainly but Tristram's head over a row of sunflowers. This state of things went on from bad to worse. In 1869, a committee of the Union was appointed "to enquire into, and report upon, the history, condition, and treatment of the paintings," which are still obstinately described as frescoes. Inconclusive negotiations went on with Rossetti for about two years on the question of completing his unfinished picture; as regards the rest of the work, though a suggestion to whitewash it all over was dropped, and another, to re-

place it by Morris's then celebrated pomegranate wall-paper, was not carried, the only point on which the opinion of the Society was unanimous was that no more money should be spent. Rossetti took very justifiable offence at a pamphlet—anonymous, but of well-known authorship—the effect of which had been to defeat a motion empowering expense to be incurred in cleaning and repairing the paintings; he refused point blank to have anything further to do with the affair: and the fresco committee was ultimately dissolved without anything being done. By the kindness of Mr. J. R. Thursfield, who was chairman of the fresco committee, I am enabled to give a letter which Morris wrote to him soon after the committee was appointed. It will be noticed that separate negotiations were going on with Rossetti about his picture, and that the letter therefore refers only to the other six of the original seven. The letter is undated, and written from Queen Square.

"Dear Sir,

"I am sorry you are in trouble about the works at the Union, and hope I shan't increase it by my letter: I can speak distinctly about two of the pictures in question, Mr. Hughes', the one at the North end, and Mr. Burne-Jones' (Nimue and Merlin). Of these I think the design of Mr. Hughes to be quite among the best works of that painter, and a very beautiful and remarkable one: I think I have been told it is in a bad state; but I suppose something might be done to it. Mr. Burne-Jones' is a beautiful work, and admirably suits its space as to decoration; it would be quite absurd to cover it up. Mr. Pollen's, opposite Mr. Hughes', was never finished; two others, one by Mr. Prinsep, another by Mr. Stanhope, though not

very complete in some ways, yet looked very well in their places I think. As for my own, I believe it *has* some merits as to colour, but I must confess I should feel much more comfortable if it had disappeared from the wall, as I'm conscious of its being extremely ludicrous in many ways. In confidence to you I should say that the whole affair was begun and carried out in too piecemeal and unorganized a manner to be a real success—nevertheless it would surely be a pity to destroy some of the pictures, which are really remarkable, and at the worst can do no harm there. I am sorry if this is 'cold comfort'; but I thought you would really like to know what I thought, and so here it is. I must thank you heartily however for the enthusiasm you have shown in the matter; and I wish I could be of more use to you.

"Yours faithfully,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

The subject of Hughes's picture was "The Death of Arthur." The others were, "Sir Pelleas and the Lady Ettarde," by Prinsep: "How King Arthur received his sword Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake," by Pollen: and "Sir Gawaine and the three Damsels at the Fountain in the Forest of Arroy," by Stanhope.

The re-decoration of the roof, which was carried out by Morris in 1875, left the wall-paintings below untouched; and they still glimmer faintly in their places, blackened, faded, and peeled, the light here and there falling on some still recognizable feature, a long fold of drapery, a patch of ring armour, or the straight line of a knight's sword. The only record of their first fugitive and fairylike beauty is in an article by Mr. Coventry Patmore in the Saturday Review for the 26th of December, 1857, which speaks

of the colour as "sweet, bright, and pure as a cloud in the sunrise," and "so brilliant as to make the walls look like the margin of an illuminated manuscript."

For Morris, the autumn and winter months of 1857-8 were, in spite of the discouragements caused by his slow progress in the technique of painting, full of hope and enthusiasm. Among his old Oxford friends, Price and Faulkner especially, he regained something of the old light-heartedness which life in London and the imperious domination of Rossetti had begun to impair. A few extracts from Price's diary during the autumn term give a picture of the resumed, but altered, life in Oxford. Term had begun on the 16th of October.

"Oct. 17. Breakfasted with Top at Johnson's in George Street. Rossetti, Hughes, Prinsep, Ted, and Coventry Patmore there. To the Union to see the frescoes.

"Oct. 18. To Rossetti's—R. painting the Marriage of St. George. Prinsep there; six feet one, 15 stone, not fat, well-built, hair like finest wire, short, curly and seamless—age only 19. Stood for Top for two hours in a dalmatic.

"Oct. 24. Spent afternoon in daubing in black lines on the Union roof for Topsy. Whist in the evening as usual (at Rossetti's).

"Oct. 30. Evening at George Street. Rossetti, Ted, Topsy, Hughes, Swan, Faulkner, Bowen of Balliol, Bennet of Univ., Munro, Hill, Prinsep and Stanhope there. Topsy read his grind on Lancelot and Guenevere—very grand.

"Oct. 31. Stippled and blacklined at Union. Evening at George Street: Rossetti and I versus Top and Faulkner at whist. Madox Brown turned

up. Rossetti said that Topsy had the greatest capacity for producing and annexing dirt of any man he ever met with.

"Nov. 1. To Hill's, where were Tospy, Ted, Swan, Hatch, Swinburne of Balliol (introduced I think by Hatch) and Faulkner."

Several of the names mentioned here are new. Swan, a friend of Rossetti's and a man of some amount of genius which verged on eccentricity, had taken a considerable part in executing the decorations on the Union roof, his name, together with those of Morris, Faulkner, and St. John Tyrwhitt of Christ Church, being inscribed on one of the rafters as the artificers. It is recorded that up in the dark angles of the roof they sometimes painted, instead of flowers, little figures of Morris with his legs straddling out like the portraits of Henry VIII.: for the slim young man of the previous year was now not only, in a charming phrase used of him at the time by Burne-Jones, "unnaturally and unnecessarily curly," but growing fat. Bowen, who as Treasurer of the Union had been primarily responsible for accepting the suggested decoration, gave it afterwards, as President, his untiring support. Hill is the well-known editor of Boswell's "Johnson," who, though a little junior to the "set," had been closely connected with it. Bennet had been Treasurer of the Union just before Bowen, and succeeded him in the Presidency in the following year. Swinburne had come up to Balliol in January, 1856; the acquaintance now formed with Morris at Oxford ripened into intimacy in London a few years later. He had already written a long poem on Iseult Blanchemains, and their common enthusiasm for Malory and the Arthurian legend drew them together. Swinburne was among the most fervid admirers of Morris's early

poetry, on which he lavished all the habitual generosity of his praise.

The Bohemian life in London had by this time raised Morris's unconventionality, which had always been extreme, to a still more excessive height. To wear long hair, and a soft felt hat, and to smoke a pipe in season and out of season, was still, as in the earlier days of Clive Newcome, the mark of an artist. But Morris exceeded even the customary licence of Gandish's. "Morris went to Jones's on Sunday night," runs a note in Miss Price's diary, "while they were here; and his hair was so long and he looked so wild that the servant who opened the door would not let him in, thinking he was a burglar." He forswore dress clothes, and there is a ludicrous story of his ineffectual attempt to get into Hughes's evening trousers when he was going to dine at high table in Christ Church. To go into society was torture to him, and he never took pains to conceal it. One of the tribulations of these months was the task, equally hard in either case, of evading or accepting the invitations of Dr. Henry Acland, whose intimacy with Ruskin and appreciation of the Pre-Raphaelite school led him to offer constant hospitality to the young painters. Once, when they were to dine with Dr. Acland, Morris invented an illness and sent his apologies by Burne-Jones. Unfortunately, Burne-Jones arrived with this message when there still wanted a few minutes to dinner-time. Acland, who was all kindness, instantly, to Burne-Jones's infinite dismay, put on his hat and went round to see the sick man in his lodgings: he was found, apparently in the best of health and spirits, sitting at dinner with Faulkner and playing cribbage over the meal. He had to confess recovery, and be led off to dinner. Another story of the same period

is equally characteristic. At dinner one evening in George Street, Prinsep said something, whether intentionally or not, which offended Morris. Every one expected an outburst of fury. But by a prodigious effort of self-control Morris swallowed his anger, and only bit his fork—one of the common four-pronged fiddle-pattern kind—which was crushed and twisted about almost beyond recognition. During these months, too, he was feeling his way in other arts and handicrafts: carving a block of freestone into a capital of foliage and birds, done with great spirit and life, Mr. Arthur Hughes says; drawing and colouring designs for stained-glass windows; and modelling from the life in clay. Price sat to him for a clay head which he was modelling; it was never finished, because whenever Morris grew impatient he flew at it and smashed it up. In carving the stone block he struck a splinter into his own eye; and his language to Dr. Acland, who was called in to look after the injury, was even for him unequalled in its force and copiousness. About the same time he was making his first experiments in reviving the decayed art of embroidery. He had a frame made from an old pattern, and worsteds specially dyed for him by an old French dyer. He worked at this till he had mastered the principles of laying and radiating the stitches so as to cover the ground closely and smoothly. A piece of work he began then with a bird and tree pattern embroidered on it is still in existence. In these months also were written a number of the finest of the poems published, early in 1858, in Morris's first volume, "The Defence of Guenevere and other Poems."

This volume is so well known that any detailed account or criticism of its contents would be superfluous. It is one of those books which, without ever

reaching a wide circulation or a large popularity, have acted with great intensity on a small circle of minds, and, to those on whom they struck fully home, given a new colour to the art of poetry and the whole imaginative aspect of things. On its appearance, it met with no acclamations; it did not even gain the distinction of abuse: it simply went unnoticed. Only two or three contemporary notices of it have been traced. One other, which really showed some appreciation of its unusual qualities, somewhat missed its object by not appearing for eight years. A reviewer in the Athenæum treated it as a mere piece of Pre-Raphaelite eccentricity, "a curiosity which shows how far affectation may mislead an earnest man towards the fog-land of Art."

The volume seems to have had, on the whole, all the usual chances at its entrance into the world. Morris, it is true, was then a bad and an impatient corrector of proofs: the punctuation of the poems is deplorable, and there are a good many serious misprints. But such minute points hardly affect a book's fortunes, and in other respects the volume is pleasant-looking, and even handsome. Some two hundred and fifty copies were sold and given away, and the remainder of the edition stayed long on the publishers' shelves. So late as 1871 there were still copies to be had. Even the reprint of 1875, made at the instance of Mr. F. S. Ellis, owed such popularity as it had mainly to its being by the author of "The Earthly Paradise."

But if the value of poetry is to be measured (to use the phrase of the logicians) in intension, few volumes have a more marked place in modern literature. Mr. Swinburne's just and tempered language as to the reception of "The Defence of Guenevere" hardly needs

to be supplemented. "Here and there," he wrote of it when Morris had leaped into fame and even popularity with the appearance of "Jason," "it met with eager recognition and earnest applause; nowhere, if I err not, with just praise or blame worth heeding. It seems to have been now lauded and now decried as the result and expression of a school rather than a man, of a theory or tradition rather than a poet or student. Those who so judged were blind guides. Such things as were in this book are taught and learnt in no school but that of instinct. Upon no piece of work in the world was the impress of native character ever more distinctly stamped, more deeply branded. It needed no exceptional acuteness of ear or eye to see or hear that this poet held of none, stole from none, clung to none, as tenant, or as beggar, or as thief. Not yet a master, he was assuredly no longer a pupil."

It is of the four Arthurian poems which stand at the beginning of the volume that Mr. Swinburne more specially speaks; and these to many readers are no doubt the flower of the whole. One can well imagine with what hushed admiration, with what a shock and surprise of emotion, that little gathering at George Street, on the 30th of October, 1857, heard, for the first time, "King Arthur's Tomb." Here again Mr. Swinburne's words are the final ones: "There is scarcely connection here, and scarcely composition. There is hardly a trace of narrative power or mechanical arrangement. There is a perceptible want of tact and practice, which leaves the poem in parts indecorous and chaotic. But where among other and older poets of his time and country is one comparable for perception and experience of tragic truth, of subtle and noble, terrible and piteous things? where a touch of passion at once so broad and so sure?"

Mr. J. W. Hoole, the son of a neighbour of the Morrises in Essex, who was then an undergraduate at Queen's, contributes a curious remark that Morris made with regard to these Arthurian poems. "He took me across to his lodgings opposite Queen's College and read me 'The Defence of Guenevere,' before it was printed. On my enquiring—with not very good taste to an original poet—in whose style the poem was written, he answered 'More like Browning than any one else, I suppose.'" This may at first seem a lightly-uttered fancy; but the more one thinks over it, the more is one struck with its truth. The author of "The Defence of Guenevere" approaches poetry from the same side, one may so put it, as the author of "Men and Women." What both alike aim at and attain is the realization, keen, swift, and minute, of some tragic event or situation, and the expression with absolute sincerity of that exact event or situation precisely as thus realized and no further, disregarding conventions of poetical treatment, and too eager to pause over finesse of workmanship. The affinity is perhaps closer, as it is more evident, in the other group of poems, constituting about half the volume, which are suggested more or less directly by Froissart, as the Arthurian poems are by Malory. They might aptly be headed Dramatic Lyrics and Dramatic Romances of the fourteenth century. The range is much less than Browning's; but the intensity of realization is even greater, and it is free from the slightest trace of parade or pedantry. For to Morris the Middle Ages, out of which he sometimes seemed to have strayed by some accident into the nineteenth century, were his habitual environment: he lived in them as really and as simply as if he had been translated back to them in actual vision. The Little Tower and the

Haystack in the Floods are as clearly before his eyes as if the riding of the knights had gone by but a day before: the talk of Sir Peter Harpdon and his man seems transcribed from memory. It is this amazing power of realization, when he is dealing with his own period, that gives to the masterpiece of his later years, "The Dream of John Ball," so vivid a colour and truth; it is the want of it, when he is off that ground, that leaves him open to the accusation of being mannered or languid when he deals with a story which is either not mediæval or not treated in a frankly mediæval spirit.

Browning himself, it may not be without interest to know, was one of the earliest and the most enthusiastic admirers of this volume. "It has been my delight," he said of it many years afterwards, "ever since I read it." When the first volume of "The Earthly Paradise" was published, he wrote to Morris a letter of warm and finely-appreciative praise. "It is a double delight to me," he added, "to read such poetry, and know you of all the world wrote it,—you whose songs I used to sing while galloping by Fiesole in old days,—'Ho, is there any will ride with me?'"

Between the charm of the Malory poems and that of the Froissart poems the choice is one of personal feeling. But the part of the volume which one gathers to represent its spirit and form most intimately to many lovers of poetry, is neither of these. It consists of the poems of a wholly unbased and fantastic romance, in which any traceable poetical influence is that of Poe rather than of Browning. Their very names—such names as "The Blue Closet," or "The Sailing of the Sword," or "Two Red Roses across the Moon"—are taken straight out of dreamland. It is these poems on which the unjust praise and the blame

not worth heeding which the volume drew on itself were primarily spent. They lend themselves alike to the purposes of the *précieux* and the parodist. Never perhaps has poetry come nearer to what some theorists have laid down as its goal, the emotional effect of music, than in some of these remarkable pieces—"The Wind," "Spellbound," "Near Avalon." Even now, to those to whom they have been long familiar, their faint beauty comes back, ever and again, like a fugitive and haunting scent, or the vague trouble of a dream remembered in a dream.

It was part, and a very necessary part, of the Pre-Raphaelite creed to disregard both neglect and criticism: and Morris, of all persons in the world, was one who was only happy in his own content, and over whom the opinions of others slipped without leaving much impression. For professional literary criticism, beyond all, his feeling was something between amusement and contempt. "To think of a beggar making a living by selling his opinion about other people!" he characteristically said: "and fancy any one paying him for it!" he added, in a climax of scorn. Yet an author's first book, and more so if it be a book of poems, is a thing by itself: and it would seem that the little notice the volume met with united with other causes to make him for a time stop writing poetry. In the few months before its publication he had been producing very fast, and with a swift growth in range of manner and power of expression. The turbid quality which weakens, or even disfigures, so many of the earlier poems was daily running clearer. "King Arthur's Tomb," "The Eve of Crecy," "Praise of my Lady," all written in these months, sound a chord of imaginative beauty such as Tennyson himself, at the same age, had not surpassed. The mixed lyric and dramatic method in-

vented by him for "Sir Peter Harpdon's End," with its odd and fascinating use of blank verse, had in it all kinds of possibilities. He had already planned, and begun to write, a cycle of poems in this form on subjects from the War of Troy. There are a few surviving fragments of "The Maying of Guenevere," the opening piece of an Arthurian cycle which would have ended with "King Arthur's Tomb," and in which, it has been thought, he would have found his most real inspiration. Tennyson's "Morte d'Arthur" still stood alone, an inimitable fragment; it was not till 1859 that the first of "The Idyls of the King" were published. After that, the treatment of the story in a different, even if a simpler and sincerer manner, was almost precluded by the imposing brilliance of the Tennysonian version, and its remarkable conquest of both critical approval and popular fame. But now this, and all other poetry, was laid aside; and when Morris laid a thing aside, he did so with the same energy with which he had taken it up. "It is to be regretted," says Canon Dixon, speaking as one who has remained faithful to the earlier aims and ideals of Morris's art, "that he did so. He could have produced more of the same sort then. When he afterwards took up poetry again, he could not do it. His 'Jason' was better than his 'Earthly Paradise,' but the first flavour was gone from them both."

"The Defence of Guenevere" was published in March. About the same time Burne-Jones, left much alone in Red Lion Square since the beginning of the year, had fallen rather dangerously ill, and was carried off by Mrs. Prinsep, the kind friend of all artists, to Little Holland House, to be taken care of and nursed back to health. He stayed there during a great part of the year. There was, therefore, no permanent

companion for Morris in Red Lion Square; and though it remained his London lodging, much the greater part of the year was spent by him at Oxford, either in his rooms in the city or at Summertown with the Maclarens. There he went on painting hard, but with continued dissatisfaction. He even sold a picture for the considerable sum of £70 to Mr. Plint of Leeds. The negotiation was conducted by Rossetti, who loved making bargains for his friends as well as for himself. This picture, which has now, after many wanderings, returned to the possession of his family, is believed to be the only finished easel-painting by Morris certainly known to exist. It was exhibited in London at the New Gallery in January, 1898.

There was, however, a further and a stronger reason for his prolonged stay at Oxford. Towards the end of the Long Vacation of 1857, Rossetti and Burne-Jones, who had gone, after a day's work at the Union, to the little Oxford theatre, found sitting just behind them two girls, daughters of Mr. Robert Burden, of Holywell Street. The elder attracted their attention at once by her remarkable beauty, of a type not common in England, and specially admired by Rossetti. They made her acquaintance; and after some little negotiation she was persuaded to sit to him and his friends, and continued to do so while the work at the Union was going on. With Morris the attraction went deeper, and soon after his volume of poems appeared they became engaged. Only a few flitting notices can be gathered of his life, or thoughts, or occupations, during this summer and the following winter. Sometimes there are traces of him at his mother's new house at Leyton, sometimes in London at Red Lion Square, or at Little Holland House, drawing from a tree that overhung a pond in the gar-

den—pond, tree, and garden now long vanished; sometimes painting in the Maclarens' orchard at Summertown, where the holes he dug in the grass by wriggling his chair about as he sat at his easel, and the force of his language when a gust of wind blew the canvas off wet side down, were long remembered; or reading aloud interminably to the group of friends assembled there from Froissart and Monstrelet and Malory's "Morte d'Arthur." In August he was once more in Northern France, and rowed down the Seine from Paris—then an unusual and adventurous thing to do—with Faulkner and Webb. An Oxford boat had been sent over from Bossom's to Paris, where it arrived with a large hole in its bottom. The mending of the boat, and the start from the Quai du Louvre amid the satire of the populace, as the three Englishmen embarked with three carpet bags and half-a-dozen bottles of wine for their luggage, were the beginnings of an almost epic voyage. During this trip the plan of building himself a house was discussed between him and Webb, and on their return there was much travelling about to look at possible sites for it. In the late autumn there are references to an illness, cheerfully attributed by his friends to his eating and drinking too much, or rather to his being quite careless (as he remained always) of what he ate and drank. In October he was in France again, "to buy old manuscripts and armour and ironwork and enamel." The instability which he found, or thought he found, in his own character became for a time acute. The overstrain of the crowded years through which he had been passing, with all their inward revolutions, all their pangs of growth and fevers of imagination, had left him, like some lover in one of his own poems, languid and subject to strange fluctuations of mood. In a

curious and illuminating phrase used by one of his friends in writing about him some little time before, "he has lately taken a strong fancy for the human." One thing at all events became more and more certain, that the external impulse under which he had become a painter had exhausted its force. A new kind of life opened out vaguely before him, in which that "small Palace of Art of my own," long ago recognized by him as one of his besetting dreams, was now peopled with the forms of wife and children, and contracted to the limits of some actual home, in which life and its central purposes need not be thwarted by any baseness or ugliness of immediate surroundings: an undertaking for a lifetime, and much more than a lifetime, as it turned out, but then certainly conceived as possible.

On Tuesday the 26th of April, 1859, William Morris and Jane Burden were married in the little ancient parish church of St. Michael's in Oxford; he was then just five and twenty. Dixon, who had by this time taken Orders and was curate of St. Mary's, Lambeth, came down to perform the ceremony; Faulkner was best man; and Burne-Jones and a few more of the old Oxford set were there. It was the last scene in the Oxford life of the Brotherhood

CHAPTER V

RED HOUSE: FORMATION OF THE FIRM: THE FALL OF TROY

1859-1865

AFTER a six weeks' tour to Paris, Belgium, and the Rhine, as far as Basle, Mr. and Mrs. Morris returned to London, to furnished rooms at 41, Great Ormond Street, where they lived while their own house was being built. The establishment at Red Lion Square was finally broken up, Burne-Jones going into lodgings of his own in Charlotte Street. Webb had just left Street's office to set up as an architect on his own account, and the building of the new house was placed in his hands. The house was to be a proving piece. In it the theories of its owner and its architect on domestic building and decoration were to be worked out in practice: and the scheme and details were the joint invention of the two. The notion of building a house after his own fancy was one which had already been in Morris's mind for a considerable time. He wanted it not merely as a place to live in, but as a fixed centre and background for his artistic work. He hated designing in the air, without relation to a definite material and a particular purpose. While his whole work as a decorative manufacturer may be not untruly

said to have sprung directly out of the building and furnishing of this house, it would be almost equally true to say that the house, first in idea and then in fact, sprung out of his devoting himself to the practice of decorative art and requiring, as one might say, a canvas to work upon. When his approaching marriage made a home of some sort, other than London or Oxford lodgings, a necessity, the building of the house followed as a matter of course.

It was to be in the country, and by preference not far from London, though as to this he was really indifferent. The great network of suburban railways had then hardly begun to exist, and the spot finally fixed upon, though little more than ten miles from London by road, was about three miles from the nearest station, that at Abbey Wood on the North Kent Line. From the Plumstead marshes, along the inner edge of which this railway runs, a steep ascent leads southward through wooded slopes to a gently undulating country, intersected by the great high road from London to Dover, the ancient Watling Street. On the part of this plateau known as Bexley Heath, close to the little village of Upton, Morris had bought an orchard and meadow, and it was settled to build the house in the orchard so that it should have apple and cherry trees all round it from the first. Three or four labourers' cottages close by were locally known as Hog's Hole; the discovery of this name affording unspeakable and lasting satisfaction to Rossetti. The district, even when less built over than it is now, was not one of any remarkable charm: it had something of the sadness of that common English lowland country of which Morris was so fond; but was fertile, well wooded and watered, and interspersed with pleasant orchards and coppices.

What Morris required in a country was that it should be open and fertile, and have in it some central and distinguishing natural feature of hill or river. In the normal English landscape, "so rich and so limited, no big hill, no wide river to lead one's thoughts or hopes along," and everywhere inclosed, he felt a sense of imprisonment. The wide arid heaths of Surrey and the close rich Devonshire valleys were alike distasteful to him; he set his own plain and rather ugly Essex country far before either. But, till he went to live on the Upper Thames, Kent was probably his favourite county; and he may have pleased himself with the notion of living close to the track of the Canterbury pilgrims, the *vena porta* of mediæval England. Just below him lay the little valley of the Cray, beaded with its string of villages; and further off, but within an easy walk, the beautiful valley of the Darenth. At Abbey Farm were the remains of an Augustinian Priory, one of those suppressed by Wolsey in order to found his great college at Oxford. The particular spot, however, was very much chosen because the orchard seemed to suit his requirements as nearly as possible. It was one of a number of places advertised for sale which he had looked at in the previous summer.

The reaction from early Victorian stucco had just begun to set in, but had not yet begun to produce any visible effect over the country. Nowadays, when the red brick of the common modern country house is to be seen on every roadside, this, the first house that Webb built, might be passed without any remark by a casual traveller. But Mr. Norman Shaw was then a clerk in Street's office; stucco and slate still reigned supreme in all districts where stone was not the native building material; and the name of Red House given to the new building was sufficient to describe it without

ambiguity to all the neighbourhood. Its planning was as original as its material. The type of house which Morris was fond of describing as a square box with a lid was completely abandoned: it was planned as an L-shaped building, two-storied, with a high-pitched roof of red tile. The beautiful oak staircase filled a bold projection in the angle, and corridors ran from it along both the inner walls, so that the rooms on both limbs of the house faced outward on to the garden. The two other sides of this half-quadrangle were masked by rose-trellises, inclosing a square inner court, in the middle of which rose the most striking architectural feature of the building, a well-house of brickwork and oak timber, with a steep conical tiled roof. Externally the house was plain almost to severity, and depended for its effect on its solidity and fine proportion. The decorative features it possessed were constructional, not of the nature of applied ornament: the frankly emphasized relieving arches over the windows, the deep cornice moulding, the louvre in the high open roof over the staircase, and the two spacious recessed porches. Inside, its most remarkable feature was the large drawing-room, which filled the external angle of the L on the upper floor. It looked by its main end window northwards towards the road and the open country; and a projecting oriel in the western side overlooked the long bowling green, which ran, encircled with apple trees, close under the length of that wing. The decoration of this room, and of the staircase by which it was reached, was to be the work of several years for Morris and his friends: and he boldly announced that he meant to make it the most beautiful room in England. But through the whole house, inside and out, the same ideal standard was, so far as possible, to be kept up.

It was at this point that the problem of decoration began. The bricklaying and carpentering could be executed directly from the architect's designs. But when the shell of the house was completed, and stood clean and bare among its apple trees, everything, or nearly everything, that was to furnish or decorate it had to be likewise designed and made. Only in a few isolated cases—such as Persian carpets, and blue china or delft for vessels of household use—was there anything then to be bought ready-made that Morris could be content with in his own house. Not a chair, or table, or bed; not a cloth or paper hanging for the walls; nor tiles to line fireplaces or passages; nor a curtain or a candlestick; nor a jug to hold wine or a glass to drink it out of, but had to be reinvented, one might almost say, to escape the flat ugliness of the current article. The great painted settle from Red Lion Square was taken and set up in the drawing-room, the top of it being railed in so as to form a small music gallery. Much of the furniture was specially designed by Webb and executed under his eye: the great oak dining-table, other tables, chairs, cupboards, massive copper candlesticks, fire-dogs, and table glass of extreme beauty. The plastered walls and ceilings were treated with simple designs in tempera, and for the hall and main living rooms a richer and more elaborate scheme of decoration was designed and gradually began to be executed. The garden was planned with the same care and originality as the house; in both alike the study of older models never sank into mere antiquarianism or imitation of obsolete forms. Morris's knowledge of architecture was so entirely a part of himself that he never seemed to think about it as anything peculiar. But in his knowledge of gardening he did, and did with reason, pride himself. It is very

doubtful whether he was ever seen with a spade in his hands; in later years at Kelmscott his manual work in the garden was almost limited to clipping his yew hedges. But of flowers and vegetables and fruit trees he knew all the ways and capabilities. Red House garden, with its long grass walks, its midsummer lilies and autumn sunflowers, its wattled rose-trellises inclosing richly-flowered square garden plots, was then as unique as the house it surrounded. The building had been planned with such care that hardly a tree in the orchard had to be cut down; apples fell in at the windows as they stood open on hot autumn nights.

Red House was sufficiently advanced for occupation towards the end of the summer of 1860. It was meant to be a permanent home. Circumstances then unforeseen obliged him to leave it after only five years, while it was still growing in beauty. But the five years spent there were probably the happiest and not the least fruitful of his life.

The difficulty of furnishing the house when built was one that demanded some more practical solution than that of getting each article singly and laboriously manufactured, even had it been easier than it was to find manufacturers who would accept such orders. Instances like that of Messrs. Powell, the great glass-makers in Whitefriars, who were receptive of new ideas and really eager to produce beautiful objects, were of the rarest occurrence; the ordinary manufacturer, like the ordinary purchaser, looked at any beautiful design with a feeling compounded of fear, apathy, and contempt. Meanwhile Morris's apprenticeship to the arts of building and painting, with their subsidiary industries, had fully kindled his inborn instinct for handicraft: from the mood of idleness into which he had for a short time fallen he plunged back into the mood

of energy, and his brain and fingers tingled to be at work. The eagerness of the maker, the joy of craftsmanship, had come to him, and came to stay. So it was that in half-unconscious adaptation to the conditions of modern life, the monastery of his Oxford dreams rose into being as a workshop, and the Brotherhood became a firm registered under the Companies Acts.

The first notion of the firm of Morris & Company, the name and wares of which have since become so widely spread, sprang up among the friends in talk, and cannot be assigned to any single author. It was in a large measure due to Madox Brown ; but perhaps even more to Rossetti, who, poet and idealist as he was, had business qualities of a high order, and the eye of the trained financier for anything that had money in it. To Morris himself, who had not yet been forced by business experience into being a business man, the firm probably meant little more than a definite agreement for co-operation and common work among friends who were also artists. The directions in which it turned its energies were to be determined, primarily, by the things which he wanted to make or to have made for his own private use, and then by the requirements, towards the purposes of their own professional work, of the rest of his associates. Of these associates Burne-Jones and Madox Brown were already regularly employed in making designs for stained glass, mainly, of course, for church windows. Webb was not only an architect, but a designer of the smaller work which is usually separate from that of the architect, or only taken up by him as by-play; a master of proportion and ornament, whether applied to the larger masses of architecture or to such things as tables and chairs and lamps. Faulkner, deeply bitten with the enthusiasms

of his friends, and unable to bear the loneliness of Oxford now that all the rest were gone, had resigned the mathematical tutorship which he held together with his Fellowship at University, and had come to London to learn the business of a civil engineer. As a man with a head for figures, who could keep the accounts of the business, he was a valuable associate ; and though he had no gift of design, he contributed a good deal of work as a craftsman. He helped in executing mural decorations ; he painted pattern-tiles, and figure-tiles on which the design had been drawn by a more skilled hand ; and he even, in March, 1862, successfully cut a wood-block, on which Rossetti had drawn the well-known illustration for his sister's poem of "Goblin Market."

Church decoration was at first the main employment of the new firm. It was just at that time rising into the rank of an important industry. Jowett, writing to a friend in 1865, remarks that "Muscular Christianity is gone out," and notices, as a prominent sign of the times, the æsthetico-Catholic revival going on in the London churches. But that movement had sprung up some years earlier, while the school of Kingsley and Maurice was still living and powerful. A large section of the neo-Catholic party, abandoning the exhausted battlefields of theology, had turned from theory to practice and from the fourth to the thirteenth century. Their earlier campaign had been among the clergy ; and there they had won a decided, though in itself a barren, victory. Now with fresh ardour and with more practical sagacity, they flung themselves into the task of winning over the laity. Plain men and women, to whom primitive tradition and apostolical succession were tiresome or meaningless sounds, could appreciate the sensible beauty of Anglo-Catholic ritual. In the

building of new, and the redecoration of old, churches, there was a demand for glass, tiles, altar-cloths, and every sort of furnishing, which was but feebly met by the established producers of upholsterer's Gothic. Through the architects Street and Bodley the newly-formed company had at once work of this sort put in their hands. The Rev. A. H. Mackonochie, curate-in-charge of St. Alban's, Holborn, whose name became so notorious a few years later in connexion with questions of the mixed chalice and altar lights, was one of the firm's earliest customers. St. Alban's was being built in 1862, and after its consecration in February, 1863, much remained to be done to it in the way of decoration. But their first commissions, and the principal pieces of their first year's business, were for the decoration of two new churches which were being built by Bodley, those of St. Martin's, Scarborough, and St. Michael's, Brighton. In the latter, the chancel-roof was painted by Morris, Webb, and Faulkner, with their own hands: and the windows were executed from designs by Madox Brown and Burne-Jones.

This typical instance of co-operation shows obvious reasons for the inclusion in the firm of the five members named. As for Rossetti, he contributed a few designs for both glass and tiles; but if asked why he had become a partner in a manufacturing firm, he might have, with some truth, given the reply, *Quia nominor leo*: he was looked up to by the younger men as their master mind, and they would hardly have thought of starting any new scheme without him. The seventh member of the company, Mr. Peter Paul Marshall, was a friend of Madox Brown's, by profession a surveyor and sanitary engineer at Tottenham. He contributed several cartoons for glass, and a few designs for furniture and church decoration, but otherwise took

little part in the work of the firm. His inclusion was, even at the moment, rather unaccountable. There had been talk of asking others to join, and the matter seems to have been hurried through at the end owing to Morris's excitement and eagerness to get to work. Mr. Arthur Hughes had actually been included as a member, and his name appears in the first prospectus issued by the new firm, but he withdrew from it before it was formally registered. "I was living far off in the country," Mr. Hughes tells me, "while the others were in town, and attending the meetings was inconvenient for me, and also I rather despaired of its establishment, and I wrote asking to be let go. Curiously, my letter was crossed by one from Morris asking me to make a design for a portion of a window, and another for a piece of jewel work. I did the drawing for the window, and it remains my only contribution."

With the formation, in April, 1861, of the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., the old Oxford Brotherhood, with its ideas of common life and united action, finally fell asunder. The outer fringe of that company had already passed into circles and interests of their own. Fulford and Dixon had taken Orders; Macdonald had gone to America. Price, the only other member of the inner circle, had, at the end of 1860, accepted an appointment in Russia, which took him away from England for three years. Morris, Burne-Jones, and Faulkner were actually in a minority on the new association. The Round Table was dissolved indeed.

Seldom has a business been begun on a smaller capital. Each of the members held one share, and on the 11th of April the finance of the company began with a call of £1 per share. On this, and on an unsecured loan of £100 from Mrs. Morris of Leyton,

the first year's trading was done. Premises were taken from Lady Day, 1861, at 8, Red Lion Square, a few doors off Morris's and Burne-Jones's old rooms. The ground floor of the house was occupied by a working jeweller: the firm rented the first floor for an office and show room, and the third floor, with part of the basement, for workshops. In the basement a small kiln was built, for firing glass and tiles. As the work grew on their hands, about a dozen men and boys came to be regularly employed on the premises. The boys were got from a Boys' Home in the Euston Road; the men chiefly from Camden Town. The foreman, Mr. George Campfield, was a glass-painter who had come under Morris's notice as a pupil at the evening classes of the Working Men's College in Great Ormond Street. He is still in the employment of the firm at Merton Abbey. There were regular weekly meetings of the firm on Wednesday evenings, but otherwise Morris and Faulkner were the only two partners who partook in the active management of the business.

The following letter from Morris to his old tutor, inclosing a copy of the circular announcing the starting of the business, shows that church decoration was what he chiefly looked to for custom. Among the early purchases entered as house expenses in the books of the firm is a Clergy List, and—divided from it only by an entry for fluoric acid—a Vulgate. Work in Bodley's two new churches at Scarborough and Brighton, and in a third, that of Selsley All Saints, near Stroud, was the main business of this year.

"8, Red Lion Square,
"April 19th, 1861.

"My dear Guy,

"By reading the enclosed you will see that I have started as a decorator which I have long meant

to do when I could get men of reputation to join me, and to this end mainly I have built my fine house. You see we are, or consider ourselves to be, the only really artistic firm of the kind, the others being only glass painters in point of fact (like Clayton & Bell), or else that curious nondescript mixture of clerical tailor and decorator that flourishes in Southampton Street, Strand; whereas we shall do—most things. However, what we are most anxious to get at present is wall-decoration, and I want to know if you could be so kind as to send me (without troubling yourself) a list of clergymen and others, to whom it *might* be any use to send a circular. In about a month we shall have some things to show in these rooms, painted cabinets, embroidery and all the rest of it, and perhaps you could look us up then: I suppose till the holidays you couldn't come down to Red House: I was very much disappointed that you called when I was out before.

"With kind regards to Mrs. Guy,
"Believe me
"Yours very truly
"WILLIAM MORRIS."

But household furniture and decoration had also been taken in hand. Some of the table glass designed by Webb and executed by Messrs. Powell was the first thing actually sold: and designs of Webb's for furniture and jewellery were also being carried out, the former by Mr. Curwen, a cabinet-maker in the neighbourhood, the latter by the working jeweller on the ground floor at Red Lion Square. The circular referred to lays no stress on the ecclesiastical side of decoration. It is headed "Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving,

Furniture, and the Metals"; and the eight names of the members (including, as has been explained, that of Mr. Arthur Hughes) follow in alphabetical order.

"The growth of Decorative Art in this country," it proceeds, "owing to the efforts of English Architects, has now reached a point at which it seems desirable that Artists of reputation should devote their time to it. Although no doubt particular instances of success may be cited, still it must be generally felt that attempts of this kind hitherto have been crude and fragmentary. Up to this time, the want of that artistic supervision, which can alone bring about harmony between the various parts of a successful work, has been increased by the necessarily excessive outlay, consequent on taking one individual artist from his pictorial labours.

"The Artists whose names appear above hope by association to do away with this difficulty. Having among their number men of varied qualifications, they will be able to undertake any species of decoration, mural or otherwise, from pictures, properly so called, down to the consideration of the smallest work susceptible of art beauty. It is anticipated that by such co-operation, the largest amount of what is essentially the artist's work, along with his constant supervision, will be secured at the smallest possible expense, while the work done must necessarily be of a much more complete order, than if any single artist were incidentally employed in the usual manner.

"These Artists having for many years been deeply attached to the study of the Decorative Arts of all times and countries, have felt more than most people the want of some one place, where they could either obtain or get produced work of a genuine and beautiful character. They have therefore now established

themselves as a firm, for the production, by themselves and under their supervision, of—

I. Mural Decoration, either in Pictures or in Pattern Work, or merely in the arrangement of Colours, as applied to dwelling-houses, churches, or public buildings.
II. Carving generally, as applied to Architecture.
III. Stained Glass, especially with reference to its harmony with Mural Decoration.
IV. Metal Work in all its branches, including Jewellery.
V. Furniture, either depending for its beauty on its own design, on the application of materials hitherto overlooked, or on its conjunction with Figure and Pattern Painting. Under this head is included Embroidery of all kinds, Stamped Leather, and ornamental work in other such materials, besides every article necessary for domestic use.

"It is only requisite to state further, that work of all the above classes will be estimated for, and executed in a business-like manner; and it is believed that good decoration, involving rather the luxury of taste than the luxury of costliness, will be found to be much less expensive than is generally supposed."

In this interesting document it is not difficult to trace the slashing hand and imperious accent of Rossetti, now as always contemptuous of all difficulties and not over-scrupulous in accuracy of statement. The most generous of men towards brother artists, he at once put all young men in whom he saw the elements of genius on an equal footing with himself, and claimed for them the full status and privilege which he and Madox Brown had earned by long

years of work. Burne-Jones and Morris had indeed by now established a claim to this equality. But even Faulkner, as their friend, was swept in with the rest as an artist of reputation and a profound student of the decorative arts.

The circular is said, no doubt with truth, to have set up the backs of the established firms of decorators, and the new firm met with some obloquy. But it throve in spite of their jealousy. By the end of the year the business was in full working order, and began to be put under more formal management. In January, 1862, a further call of £19 a share was made on the partners, raising the paid-up capital to £140, which was never increased till the dissolution of the firm in 1874. A few hundred pounds of further capital was supplied by loans, which bore, or were supposed to bear, interest at five per cent., from Morris himself and from his mother. Work done for the firm by any member was credited to his account at fixed rates, and paid for like any other debt. Morris was to receive a salary of £150 as general manager; and in May Faulkner was formally appointed book-keeper and business manager at the same salary.

The weak point of the whole business was the want of anything like real capital. For each piece of work executed a price could be charged, such as customers were found willing to pay, which covered the cost of its production. But the output was slow, the sales uncertain, and there was no reserve to draw upon; the conduct of the work was therefore necessarily from hand to mouth, and had to be guided by the exigencies of the moment. Any extension of the business, however ultimately remunerative, threw its finances off their very unstable equilibrium. In the

course of the first three or four years Morris had, bit by bit, advanced all he could to the concern, and was not yet beginning to receive any appreciable returns. This was an anxious time for him, and perhaps the only time in his life when he was really in trouble about money. Once or twice in these early years the accounts showed an actual loss on the year's working. Fortunately his resources did prove sufficient to tide over this period, and thereafter a capital began to form itself out of accumulated profits. But these were in strict law divisible among the partners equally; and the initial fault of the enterprise very nearly led to disastrous results upon the dissolution of the partnership. Morris had yet to learn by unpleasant experiences of more kinds than one the principles on which sound business can be conducted. That he did so, and that while he was doing so he carried the business almost unaided through so crucial a period, was due to a persistency, a sagacity, an unweariable industry, for which he has seldom received adequate credit.

The designing of the work carried out by the firm was of course mainly done by the firm themselves. But other artists, including Albert Moore, William De Morgan, and Simeon Solomon, made occasional designs for glass and tiles; and, as in the days of the Union paintings, every one who could be got hold of was expected to bear a hand. Faulkner's two sisters joined him in painting tiles and pottery. Mrs. Morris and her sister, Miss Burden, with several women working under them, executed embroidery on cloth and silk. Mrs. Burne-Jones, besides embroidering, painted figured tiles. Mrs. Campfield, the foreman's wife, helped to execute altar-cloths. The works became a small whirlpool of industry that sucked in every one

who came near them. Morris's own manual labour at every kind of work which the firm undertook was unremitting. Among the various forms of mural decoration started were serge hangings, with figures and floral designs wrought on them in coloured wools. A coarse serge, in quiet but rather dull colours, was supplied by the Yorkshire manufacturers, and served well enough as a ground for the brightly-coloured embroideries. Even this Morris started with his own hands: "Top has taken to worsted work," was Rossetti's sarcastic comment. The payments for work credited to him in 1862 are more than those to all the other six partners put together: and in later years the disproportion increased still further.

At the Exhibition of 1862 the firm had two stalls, one of stained glass, the other, entered in the catalogue as "decorated furniture, tapestries, etc.," representing the beginnings of decorative work in many directions. The so-called tapestries were, of course, embroideries; it was not till many years later that Morris took up the art of weaving. Among the furniture designed by Webb during this and the following year were specimens of most articles of common domestic use, some large and highly decorated, but the greater number quite plain, and depending for their quality on their simplicity and elegant proportion. The list includes a chest, a bookcase, a wardrobe, a sideboard, a washstand, a dressing-table, a towel-horse, a looking-glass, long and round tables, an iron bedstead, table glass, and metal candlesticks. There were also painted tiles designed by Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Webb, and Morris himself, and a small amount of jewellery. Some of the tiles which were painted with subjects had also upon them verses by the firm's poet, as it amused Morris to describe himself. The work shown

at the Exhibition, though from the jury it received only a colourless and vague approbation, attracted much attention, both favourable and adverse. That it really made some impression on the public is shown by the fact that nearly a hundred and fifty pounds' worth of goods were sold from the stalls.

"I perfectly remember," writes Mrs. Richmond Ritchie of a visit to Red Lion Square early in 1862, "going with Val Prinsep one foggy morning to some square, miles away; we came into an empty ground floor room, and Val Prinsep called 'Topsy' very loud, and some one came from above with hair on end and in a nonchalant way began to show one or two of his curious, and to my uninitiated soul, bewildering treasures. I think Morris said the glasses would stand firm when he put them on the table. I bought two tumblers of which Val Prinsep praised the shape. He and Val wrapped them up in paper, and I came away very much amused and interested, with a general impression of sympathetic shyness and shadows and dim green glass."

Chintzes, paper-hangings, and carpets, afterwards the staple products of the firm, were the successive developments of later years. Paper-hangings came first; and it was with them, owing to mere exigencies of space, that the firm was forced to deviate from its first intention of turning out the manufactured article complete from their own doors. The well-known trellis wall-paper was the first designed, the rose trellis by Morris, and the birds in it by Webb. This design was made in November, 1862, and it was at first attempted to print it in oil colours from etched zinc plates. But the process proved very tedious and not satisfactory. It was soon given up, and the design recut on wooden pear-tree blocks, from which the

paper was printed, in the ordinary distemper, by Messrs. Jeffreys of Islington. Meanwhile other papers had been designed and cut on wood-blocks; and so it happened that the Daisy paper, still one of the most widely used, was, though not the first designed, the first published and placed upon the market. Once the blocks were cut, the success of the printing depended almost wholly on the care and fidelity of the colour-mixer; and to this Mr. Metford Warner, the managing partner of Messrs. Jeffreys' works, gave real and constant attention.

This first series of Morris wall-papers, the designing of which went on rapidly for several years, culminates in the favourite and beautiful pattern known as the Pomegranate. Beyond it that manner of decorating a surface could not go. When Morris resumed paper-designing, he abandoned the innocence of those formal early designs, and struck out a larger and more mature scheme of pattern. It is the later wall-papers, with their large masses and masterly composition, that are more admirable to the eye of the artist; but in those simple early patterns there is a charm of straightforward simplicity that appeals more directly to the first child-like instinct for beauty, the sense of form and colour that is undeveloped, but, so far as it reaches, perfectly true.

Some account of the progress of the business during its first year is given in a letter written by Faulkner to Price from Red Lion Square in April, 1862.

"Since Christmas, I have certainly been busy enough, what between the business of engineering, and our business in Red Lion Square. Moreover, Rossetti, with remarkable confidence, gave me a wood-block to engrave, which I with marvellous boldness, not to say impudence, undertook to do, and by jingo

I have done it, and it is published, and flattering friends say it is not so bad for a beginning. Our business in the stained glass and general decoration line flourishes so successfully that I have decided to give up engineering and take part in it: so henceforth, or rather after a week or two, Topsy will give himself more to the artistic part of the work while I shall be the business manager. I don't know whether you have heard of our firm before from me or any one else. If not, I may just as well tell you that it is composed of Brown, Rossetti, Jones, Webb, Marshall, Morris, Faulkner; that it commenced with a capital which might be considered an infinitesimal of the second order, that it has meetings once or twice a fortnight which have rather the character of a meeting of the 'Jolly Masons' or the jolly something elses than of a meeting to discuss business. Beginning at 8 for 9 p.m. they open with the relation of anecdotes which have been culled by members of the firm since the last meeting—this store being exhausted, Topsy and Brown will perhaps discuss the relative merits of the art of the thirteenth and fifteenth century, and then perhaps after a few more anecdotes business matters will come up about 10 or 11 o'clock and be furiously discussed till 12, 1, or 2.

"Our firm has arrived at the dignity of exhibition at the great exhibition, where we have already sent some stained glass, and shall shortly send some furniture which will doubtless cause the majority of spectators to admire. The getting ready of our things first has cost more tribulation and swearing to Topsy than three exhibitions will be worth. I am going down to Topsy's this afternoon and shall try to finish this letter there.

"Dear Crom," the letter goes on, "after a delay of

about a fortnight I recommence my letter. You see I did not succeed in completing it when staying down at Topsy's: the day was so beautiful and there was so much to do in the way of playing bowls and smoking pipes that the day passed without leaving time to do anything."

Life at Red House in those years was indeed realized felicity for the group of friends to a greater degree than often falls to the lot of schemes deliberately planned for happiness. The garden, skilfully laid out amid the old orchard, had developed its full beauty, and the adornment of the house kept growing into greater and greater elaboration. A scheme had been designed for the mural decoration of the hall, staircase, and drawing-room, upon various parts of which work went on intermittently for several years. The walls of the spacious and finely-proportioned staircase were to be completely covered with paintings in tempera of scenes from the War of Troy, to be designed and executed by Burne-Jones. Below them, on a large wall-space in the hall, was to be a great ship carrying the Greek heroes. It was designed, as the rest of the Troy-series were also to have been, in a frankly mediæval spirit; a warship indeed of the fourteenth century, with the shields of the kings hung over the bulwarks. Round the drawing-room, at a height of about five feet from the floor, was to be a continuous belt of pictures, the subjects of which were scenes from the fifteenth-century English romance of "Sir Degrevaunt." Three of them were executed by Burne-Jones, and remain on the walls now. Below them the wall was to have been covered with magnificent embroidered hangings. The principal bedroom was hung with indigo-dyed blue serge (then a substance which could only be procured with great

difficulty) with a pattern of flowers worked on it in bright-coloured wools. For the dining-room embroidered hangings of a much more elaborate and splendid nature were designed and partly executed, in a scheme of design like those of his later tapestries when he revived the art of tapestry-weaving, of twelve figures with trees between and above them, and a belt of flowers running below their feet. Yet another hanging, executed by Morris with his own hands, was of green trees with gaily-coloured birds among them, and a running scroll emblazoned with his motto in English, "If I can." The same motto in French reappeared in the painted glass with which a number of the windows of the house were gradually filled, and on the tiles (also executed at the works in Red Lion Square) which lined the deep porches. In the hall, a second great cupboard began to be painted with scenes from the Niebelungenlied. There were no paper-hangings in the house. The rooms that had not painted walls were hung with flower-embroidered cloth worked from his designs by Mrs. Morris and other needlewomen. Even the ceilings were decorated with bold simple patterns in distemper, the design being pricked into the plaster so as to admit of the ceiling being re-whitewashed and the decoration renewed. "Top thrives though bandy," writes Burne-Jones in February, 1862, "and is slowly making Red House the beautifullest place on earth."

Here, as soon as the Morrises moved into it at the close of the wet summer of 1860, open house was kept for all their friends. Burne-Jones and his wife —he had been married that June—spent their Sundays there almost regularly. Rossetti, Faulkner and his two sisters, Webb, Swinburne, Madox Brown, Arthur Hughes, were also frequent and welcome visi-

tors. Mr. Hughes remembers once riding down from London, and Morris riding back a good part of the way with him next day. In summer bowls were always played a great deal; and drives were taken about the country in a carriage which Morris had specially built for himself, with leather curtains, and a decided flavour of the Middle Ages about it. The winter festivities were even merrier: it was a home of young people full of the high spirits of youth. "O the joy of those Saturdays to Mondays at Red House!" writes one of the frequent guests of those days, "the getting out at Abbey Wood Station and smelling the sweet air, and then the scrambling, swinging drive of three miles or so to the house; and the beautiful roomy place where we seemed to be coming home just as much as when we returned to our own rooms. No protestations—only certainty of contentment in each other's society. We laughed because we were happy." "It was the most beautiful sight in the world," says another of his old friends of the Red House days, "to see Morris coming up from the cellar before dinner, beaming with joy, with his hands full of bottles of wine and others tucked under his arms."

Here were born his two children. On the 18th of January, 1861, he writes to Madox Brown, with a fine affectation of unconcern.

"My dear Brown,

"Kid having appeared, Mrs. Brown kindly says she will stay till Monday, when you are to come to fetch her, please. I send a list of trains in evening to Abbey Wood met by bus, viz., from London Bridge, 2.20 p.m., 4.20 p.m., 6.0 p.m., and 7.15 p.m. Janey and kid (girl) are both very well."

At the christening of the baby, named Jane Alice, after his wife and his youngest sister, there was a great gathering of friends. "The day of the christening," one of them writes, "was rainy and windy. I remember the flapping of the cover of the wagonette and a feeling of hurry-skurry through the weather in the short drive to Bexley Church. The dinner was at a T-shaped table. It must have been at it that I remember Gabriel sitting in a royal manner and munching raisins from a dish in front of him before dessert time. The Marshalls, the Browns, Swinburne, were there. Janey and I went together with a candle to look at the beds strewn about the drawing room for the men. Swinburne had a sofa; I think P. P. Marshall's was made on the floor."

On the 25th of March in the following year a second girl was born, and named Mary, after the Lady of the day.

The life of those years at Red House was for Morris one of almost complete contentment. "I grieve to say," Faulkner writes just before the Christmas of 1863, "he has only kicked one panel out of a door for this twelvemonth past." The orderly civic element, which was always one of the strongest threads in his nature, developed till he became what he would himself have called in later days a typical bourgeois, the sort of father of a family whose features were being weekly registered by Leech. Indeed, as he quite realized himself, there was in him a distinct strain of Mr. Briggs. Like tens of thousands of his fellow-citizens, he joined a volunteer corps during the war scare of the winter of 1859-60. Lady Burne-Jones remembers that he was in camp with his battalion at Wimbledon in June, 1861, when the great Tooley Street fire broke out, and how he brought down news of its progress on returning to

Red House. "I always did hate fireworks," he wrote afterwards while mentioning a fire at the works in Islington where his wall-papers were printed, "especially since I saw Cotton's wharf ablaze some eighteen years ago." The memory of that terrible sight of the blazing river seems to have been lifelong with all who witnessed it.

With a growing family and a constant hospitality, the expense of living at Red House and continuing its decoration on the same lavish scale became greater year by year. At the same time the copper mine, from which the greater part of his permanent income was still derived, began to yield rapidly diminishing returns. The business in Red Lion Square had not ceased to be a drain on these diminishing revenues, and was not till some years later a trustworthy source of income. Its prospects were indeed improving. The movement towards restoring to Anglican churches and church services some part of their ancient beauty and symbolism was taking definite shape all over the country, and was beginning to be known by the name of Ritualism. Commissions for church decoration in the form of wall-painting, embroideries, or hangings, altar-cloths, stained-glass windows, and floor-tiles, came in more and more steadily. And the movement was just beginning to spread from ecclesiastical into secular life, and become what was afterwards called Æstheticism.

But this very increase in the firm's work had already made the premises in Red Lion Square insufficient for their purpose, while, as Morris had to give more of his time to its management, the expense and fatigue of managing it from Upton both increased likewise. Early in 1864 the question of removing the works to Upton and setting up a manufactory there began to

be seriously discussed. A plan was suggested and elaborated for the addition of another wing to Red House so as to make room for Burne-Jones to live there also; and ground for workshops was to be had on moderate terms close by. The scheme was very near being carried out. But before the end of the year, a series of misfortunes happened which altered the whole case for both.

In September, the Morrises had gone to seaside lodgings at Littlehampton with the Burne-Joneses and Faulkners. Scarlet fever broke out there. Miss Faulkner and Burne-Jones's little boy took back the infection with them to London. With them it ran its normal course; but a little later it developed in Mrs. Burne-Jones also, and she had a long and dangerous illness. Just then Morris caught a chill on a wet, cold journey between London and Upton, which brought on a severe attack of rheumatic fever. For some time he was wholly crippled. When he recovered, his health still was such as to make a daily journey to London quite out of the question. Burne-Jones, himself in very delicate health, in deep anxiety about his wife, and dependent for the means of actual livelihood on his daily work, felt that he could not cast himself loose from the resources and conveniences of London. The plan of a joint establishment had to be dropped. Had the business of the firm reached anything like the scale which it attained ten years later, it might have been practicable, and would have had obvious advantages, that Morris should move the works down to Upton, keeping a show-room and office in London under a resident manager. But such an expense was, as yet, out of the question. And when health began to be a serious consideration, Red House had certain disadvantages. Planned and begun in the

extraordinarily hot dry summer of 1859, it had been made to face north and was very cold in winter: it was not well situated for medical or other aid on emergencies, and the drive between it and Abbey Wood was over an exposed plateau across which eastern and northerly winds raged unchecked. Reluctantly Morris was forced to the conclusion that short of giving up the business (and with it, the power of guiding his life otherwise as he chose) the only alternative left was to give up the beautiful house into which he had put so much of his best thought and work, in which he had enjoyed five years of almost unclouded happiness, and go back to live in London.

A letter to Burne-Jones, dated "In bed, Red House," and written in a very shaky hand, towards the end of November, when he was beginning to recover from the rheumatic fever, shows how deep the disappointment was at having to give up the plan of a joint home, even before the necessity of leaving Red House himself had been forced on him.

"As to our palace of art, I confess your letter was a blow to me at first, though hardly an unexpected one: in short I cried, but I have got over it now; of course I see it from your point of view but I like the idea of not giving it up for good even if it is delusive. But now I am only thirty years old; I shan't always have the rheumatism, and we shall have lots of jolly years of invention and lustre plates together I hope. I have been resting and thinking of what you are to do: I really think you must take some sort of house in London —unless indeed you might think of living a little way out and sharing a studio in town: Stanhope and I might join in this you know. There is only one other thing I can think of, which is when you come back from Hastings come and stay with me for a month or

two, there is plenty of room for everybody and everything: you can do your work quietly and uninterruptedly; I shall have a good horse by then and Georgie and J. will be able to drive about, meantime you need not be hurried in taking your new crib. I would give £5 to see you old chap; wouldn't it be safe for you to come down here one day before you go to Hastings?"

At the end of the year the Burne-Joneses removed to Kensington, where they lived for the next three years. The giving up of Red House was fast becoming a settled thing, and it only remained to find a new home in London. It was finally found in one of the old houses in Queen Square, Bloomsbury. The house, with its yard and outbuildings behind, was large enough to serve for both living place and workshops. It was taken on lease from Midsummer, 1865, and thither, in the autumn, the business of Morris and Company was transferred from Red Lion Square, and the Morrises themselves removed from Upton in November. Red House was sold, together with such portions of its furniture and decorations as were either unremovable or too cumbrous to transfer to a house for which they had not been designed. Among the treasures thus abandoned were the whole of the tempera paintings executed on the walls, the magnificent sideboard which Webb had designed for the dining-room, and both the great painted cupboards; but the painted panels in one of these last were taken out and replaced by plain panels. There is still enough of its original decoration left at Red House to make it unique on that account alone. After he left it that autumn, Morris never set eyes on it again, confessing that the sight of it would be more than he could bear.

If emotion recollected in tranquillity were a working definition of poetry, it is in these five years, so busily tranquil after as long a period of stormy emotion, that one might expect to find poetical production the most copious. But the facts are quite the reverse. The latest poems printed in "The Defence of Guenevere" show the author in the full current of imaginative growth, reaching from manner to manner and just on the point (so one might fancy) of mastering a mixed lyrical and dramatic method capable of the most radiant and astonishing effects. For one reason or another, these beginnings were not destined to bear their natural fruit. The cycle of poems from the Trojan War, which had been planned and begun about that time, was fragmentarily continued at Red House, but remained unfinished and was soon wholly laid aside. When he began to write again, after he resumed life in London, the dramatic method was abandoned, and he reappeared to the world, not as a writer of lyrical romances, but as the author of long continuous narrative poems, of which the type was set and the fame assured by the single one first published, "The Life and Death of Jason."

Of the twelve poems which were to make up the Trojan cycle, only six were ever completed; there are imperfect drafts of two more, and of the remaining four no trace is extant. But the full list of the titles is noted down by Morris himself in a manuscript book probably dating from 1857, on a page following a fragment of the unfinished and unpublished "Maying of Guenevere." It is as follows, under the general heading of "Scenes from the Fall of Troy":

1. Helen Arming Paris.
2. The Defiance of the Greeks.

3. Hector's Last Battle.
4. Hector brought Dead to Troy.
5. Helen's Chamber.
6. Achilles' Love-Letter.
7. The Wedding of Polyxena.
8. The last Fight before Troy.
9. The Wooden Horse.
10. The Descent from the Wooden Horse.
11. Helen and Menelaus.
12. Æneas on Shipboard.

The completed scenes run to about 200 lines each in length, and the whole poem, therefore, would have been of about the bulk of a five-act play.

The story of the Trojan War is one which has for all story lovers the greatest and most abiding fascination; and its strange ending, the events that happened after the Iliad, was the part of the story which attracted Morris the most. In itself that part of the story is full of remarkably picturesque and romantic incident, which breaks out even in the dull records of Greek mythographers, Ælian and Philostratus, or in the arguments of the lost epics of the Cycle—the Æthiopiad, the Little Iliad, the Taking of Troy. It was these events which excited the imagination of the Middle Ages most; and it was in the same mediæval and romantic spirit that Morris saw and felt the whole story. He did so by instinct, long before he knew of Caxton's "Historyes of Troye," or of the vast body of mediæval romances that may be traced back to Benoît de Sainte-More and Guido delle Colonne. But when he came to know these he found them just what he meant and what he wanted; and to the last he pleased himself by fancying some thread of real tradition which had filtered down alongside of the

regular literary channels of the Greek epic, and reappeared, after the lapse of many centuries, in Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis.

"To-day," Sir Edward Burne-Jones writes in a letter of thirty years afterwards, "to breakfast came Morris, and we talked hard all morning, mainly of one subject, why the mediæval world was always on the side of the Trojans, and of Quintus Smyrnæus, and how Penthesilea came to be tenderly dealt with in ancient tales and tapestries. He was quite happy."

Troy is to his imagination a town exactly like Bruges or Chartres: spired and gabled, red-roofed, filled (like the city of King Æetes in "The Life and Death of Jason") with towers and swinging bells. The Trojan princes go out, like knights in Froissart, to tilt at the barriers, and look down from their walls on

> Our great wet ditches, where the carp and tench,
> In spite of arblasts and petrariæ,
> Suck at the floating lilies all day long.

But over the city broods a strange and almost a spectral stillness, an atmosphere like that of a sultry afternoon, darkening to thunder. None of his poems, earlier or later, are more steeped in sadness. All the fierce joy of the war has long gone by; it drags wearily on towards its inevitable close.

> Yea, they fought well, and ever, like a man
> That hangs legs off the ground by both his hands
> Over some great height, did they struggle sore,
> Quite sure to slip at last; wherefore, take note
> How almost all men, reading that sad siege,
> Hold for the Trojans; as I did at least,
> Thought Hector the best knight a long way—

So he had already written in his first volume, and the tone in these Troy poems is precisely the same. But

here we only catch a last glimpse of Hector as he goes bravely to meet his fate, and with him all the sunlight seems to fade off Troy. The struggle becomes cruel and base on both sides. Paris arms himself again, but like a man in a nightmare.

> Yea, like some man am I that lies and dreams
> That he is dead, and turning round to wake
> Is slain at once without a cry for help.

In what must be the most dolorous arming-song ever written he bids Helen a weary farewell. The lyric, in an altered shape and setting, is well known: recast, and with its sadness turned into a pensive tenderness, it occurs in the tale of "Ogier the Dane," as a song which Ogier hears sung early on a May morning by two young lovers. This is its original form:

> Love, within the hawthorn brake
> Pray you be merry for my sake,
> While I last, for who knoweth
> How near I may be my death?
>
> Sweet, be long in growing old!
> Life and love in age grow cold;
> Hold fast to life, for who knoweth
> What thing cometh after death?
>
> Trouble must be kept afar,
> Therefore go I to the war:
> Less trouble is there among spears
> Than with hard words about your ears.
>
> Love me then, my sweet and fair,
> And curse the folk that drive me there.
> Kiss me, sweet, for who knoweth
> What thing cometh after death?

Even in the Greek camp there is the same weariness and bitter languor. The homes they have left grow dim and strange;

Within the cedar presses the gold fades
Upon the garments they were wont to wear;
Red poppies grow now where their apple trees
Began to redden in late summer days.
Wheat grows upon their water-meadows now,
And wains pass over where the water ran.

This feeling culminates in a weird lyric sung by Hecuba, while still Queen in Troy, and plotting with Paris the murder of Achilles in the temple to which he is to be lured by the forged letter of Polyxena. "Ah, times are changed, the merry days are gone," has been the recurrent burden of her long speech to Paris; and then all at once she breaks into strange ballad music:

Yea, in the merry days of old
The sailors all grew overbold.
Whereof should days remembered be
That brought bitter ill to me?
  Days agone I wore but gold,
Like a light town across the wold
Seen by the stars, I shone out bright;
Many a slave was mine of right.
  Ah, but in the days of old
The sea-kings were waxen bold;
The yellow sands ran red with blood,
The towns burned up, both brick and wood;
In their long ship they carried me
And set me down by a strange sea;
None of the gods remembered me.
  Ah, in the merry days of old
My garments were all made of gold:
Now have I but one poor gown,
Woven of black wool and brown.
I draw water from the well;
I bind wood that the men fell;
Whoso willeth smiteth me,
An old woman by the sea.

In the scenes of the last night of Troy, as they are given in "The Descent from the Wooden Horse" and

"Helen and Menelaus," this effect of weird breathlessness rises to a height that is almost overwhelming. That the Greek captains in the wooden horse should be wrought up to the highest pitch of nervous tension is indeed no modernism; it was clearly before the minds of the Greek ballad-singers three thousand years ago. But the strange story, preserved in the Odyssey, of Helen singing round the horse, is used here with extraordinary effect. As they lie crowded in the darkness a voice is heard singing from without—

> O my merchants, whence come ye
> Landing laden from the sea?
> —Behold, we come from Sicily:
> Corn and wine and oil have we,
> Blue cloths and cloths of red.
> —Merry merchants, when you are dead
> We shall gain that you have lorn:
> Out-merchants from the sea,
> Your graves are not in Sicily.
> The corn for me, the wine for thee,
> The blue and the red for our ladies free.

So singing, the voice passes away. The night is dark, rainy, and windless, as they slip out of the horse and take their plotted ways. Menelaus leaves the rest, and, all alone, goes straight to the house of Deiphobus.

There, in a dimly lighted chamber, Helen cannot sleep. Deiphobus, her new husband, lies sunk in the first undisturbed repose that the Trojan princes had taken since the ten years' war began, his sword hung above the bed. But she wanders through the room restlessly, wondering if she is growing old.

> Three hours after midnight, I should think,
> And I hear nothing but the quiet rain.
> The Greeks are gone, think now, the Greeks are gone.
> Henceforward a new life of quiet days
> In this old town of Troy is now for me,

> And I shall note it as it goeth past
> Quietly as the rain does, day by day,
> Eld creeping on me. Shall I live sometimes
> In these old days whereof this is the last?
> Yea shall I live sometimes with sweet Paris
> In that old happiness twixt mirth and tears?
> The fitting on of arms and going forth,
> The dreadful quiet sitting while they fought,
> The kissing when he came back to my arms,
> And all that I remember like a tale!

Thus musing to herself, she opens the window and thrusts out her bare arm into the cool wet darkness. There is a rustle in the room behind her. Before she can turn she is in the grasp of a mail-clad man, and hears the fierce whisper of her first husband. All her strength collapses in a moment. As in a trance, she dumbly obeys his order to lean over the bed and reach down Deiphobus's sword, and to hold down his feet while Menelaus thrusts him through. Menelaus drags the bloody corpse out on to the floor and takes its place himself.

> I am the Menelaus that you knew
> Come back to fetch a thing I left behind.
> You think me changed: it is ten years ago,
> And many weary things have happened since.
> Behold me lying in my own place now:
> Abed, Helen, before the night goes by!

But on the horror of this moment there breaks a great and mingled clamour from without, the roar of the taken city. A struggling mob of Greeks and Trojans sweep by. Menelaus and Helen go to the window; a Trojan sees the hated beautiful face in the glimmer of flaming houses, and shoots at her; the arrow just misses, and sings through the window-hole. Pyrrhus, still dripping with the blood of Priam, and after him Teucer, fresh from the outrage of Ajax on Cassandra, successively appear. In the middle of

their story a cry is raised that the Trojans are making a fresh stand: and all hurry off amid a growing tumult of shouting as dawn begins to glimmer, ending in a long shrill cry of the rallied Trojans,

"Æneas and Antenor to the ships!"

Between this vivid and startling dramatic method, and the equable sweetness of the later manner as it appears in its first perfection in "The Life and Death of Jason," the interval is great indeed; nor can it be matter of wonder that the transition took place through a period of silence. But there is more in it than that. Hitherto the poetry has been, alike in its beauties and in its defects, immature. When it is resumed, it is in a manner, and of a substance, deliberately chosen; we hear in it what we may like or dislike, may regard with admiration or with indifference, what appeals to various minds variously; but it is the serious voice of the grown man.

CHAPTER VI

THE EARTHLY PARADISE

1865-1870

QUEEN SQUARE, in which Morris himself and the firm of Morris & Company took up house together in the autumn of 1865, is a backwater of older Bloomsbury, which then retained some traces of its original dignity as a suburb of the London of Queen Anne. Put out of fashion half a century before by the more modern splendours of Russell Square, it had lingered on as a residential neighbourhood; and the famous girls' school established in it about the middle of last century, and commonly known as "the ladies' Eton," had only been finally closed during the Crimean War. The residential was now becoming mingled with an industrial element. The house on the east side, No. 26, taken by Morris, and the headquarters of his work for the next seventeen years, has disappeared to make room for an extension of the National Hospital for the Paralysed and Epileptic. The ground floor was turned into an office and showroom. A large ball-room which had been built at the end of the yard, and connected with the dwelling-house by a wooden gallery, was turned into a principal workshop. There was room for other workshops in the small court at

the back, and further accommodation was found when needed in Ormond Yard close by.

With Morris now continuously on the spot, the company became little more than a name as far as regarded the direction and management of the business. Rossetti had never taken much concern in the work. After his wife's death he had been for a long time almost a recluse: now he was living in Chelsea, at the other end of London, and was wholly absorbed in his painting. Faulkner, who had no productive gift, and whose great mathematical ability was somewhat thrown away on keeping the books of the firm, had returned to work in Oxford the year before; but in his vacations he stayed much with his mother and sisters, who had a house in Queen Square a few doors off, and at these times his intercourse with Morris was constant and his share in the conduct of the business not inconsiderable. Marshall had resumed his own line of work. Burne-Jones and Madox Brown continued to supply designs for stained glass, and Webb for furniture. But the whole of the production, and, except in glass and furniture, practically the whole of the design was now in Morris's sole hands. All the kinds of work begun at Red Lion Square went on here: and gradually there began to be added other industries which afterwards became the staple production of the firm—weaving, dyeing, and printing on cloth. No long time after Red House was given up, it became possible to have supplied it from the works at Queen Square with almost everything necessary to complete its decoration and furnishing. Such is the irony of human affairs.

But the management of the rapidly extending business had been just at this time put into capable and energetic hands. To Mr. George Warrington Taylor,

business manager of Morris & Company from 1865 until his illness and death at the beginning of 1870, it was mainly due that the business became organized and prosperous. Mr. Taylor was a Catholic, of good family, who had been educated at Eton and was afterwards for some time in the Army; but he had been unfortunate in his affairs and was then almost penniless. He was full of enthusiasms in art, more especially in music; he was an ardent admirer of Wagner, whose name then was little known in England, and was also an enthusiastic follower of Rossetti and the Pre-Raphaelites in painting. He had introduced himself to Morris at Red House, and common tastes, to which Taylor added really great knowledge, confirmed the acquaintance. In 1865 he was earning a scanty livelihood as a check-taker at the Opera House in the Haymarket, and gladly accepted a post under the firm. He was a man of great ability and sweetness of character, incapable of taking care of his own affairs, but shrewd and careful in his management of other people's business. The intermittent supervision which was all that Faulkner had been able to give to the accounts of the firm since the Easter of 1864 was now replaced by the continuous care of a man who was not only a master of figures, but an expert in business methods. Morris was able to give to designing and manual work the greater part of the time that had been occupied before by employment less congenial to him. But no part of the business came amiss to him. There is a record of visits made to Queen Square in its first days by purchasers who had accidently seen some of his wall-papers; one in 1865, when Morris himself, in a dark blue linen blouse, showed the patterns and made out the bill, and a second in the following year, when he was found at

work on the design for the Pomegranate paper. In 1867 the firm obtained what was their first really important commission in non-ecclesiastical decorative work, the decoration of the Green Dining Room at the South Kensington Museum. This piece of work, seen as it is yearly by many thousands of persons, was of great value at the time in making known the name of the firm and the specific character of their work. It remains intact now. The original cost was heavy, and the heads of the Department had some scruples about passing the estimate. But their decision was, even on grounds of economy, fully justified. The excellence of the work, apart from its singular decorative merit, has more than repaid its cost. In the long run it has proved (so I am allowed to state on the authority of the Directors of the Museum) the cheapest piece of work in the buildings; for, except that the ceiling had to be repainted where it was blackened by the smoke from the gaslights, the work has never required any repair in any portion.

While the business thus went on increasing, his leisure also grew on his hands. The saving of time caused by his return to London was, of course, immense. From three to four hours were added to his working day; in spite of all depressions caused by his loss of the country, and by the crowded squalor of the district immediately adjoining this end of Bloomsbury, he felt "as if he could kiss the London pavement" when he got quit of the daily journey. It was in this increased leisure that he resumed, in new forms, the writing of poetry.

The instinct for story-telling, in its simpler forms an almost universal faculty, in its full meaning one of the rarest and most valuable of literary qualities, was strong in Morris from the first. It appears in the

schoolboy tales of romantic adventure for which he was noted at Marlborough, and in the prose romances of the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine; but now he recognized that it was his special and unique gift, and that it might be combined with lyrical qualities into a form of poetry where he could put out all his strength. Strangely enough, English poetry, so rich in nearly every form, has seldom reached its highest perfection in this one. After Chaucer, its first and greatest master, narrative poetry remained, with the great exceptions of Dryden and Keats, mostly in the hands of poets of the second rank. The rhetorical and dramatic turn of the Elizabethans stood in the way of their telling a story simply and lucidly. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were entangled in the traditions of a conventional epic. Of more modern poets, Shelley (who "had no eyes," Morris used to say) always flounders in narration; Byron, with all his admirable directness and vividness in detached passages, has not the art of carrying on a continuous story; and Scott, whose narrative instinct, whether in prose or verse, is unsurpassed, did not claim to be a master in the distinguishing qualities of poetry, and cheerfully abandoned verse for prose. It was to Chaucer, therefore, that, even apart from his delight in and kinship with the age of Chaucer, Morris might naturally turn for his model: and the plan of a cycle of romantic stories connected by some common purpose or occasion was directly suggested by the Canterbury Tales.

Some such design had already been talked over at Red House, but no beginning was made till after the removal to London. For the stories, all sources, classical and romantic alike, were to be drawn from; the world's stock of stories, in fact, which was still

much the same as it had been in Chaucer's time, was to be reviewed and selected from anew. The earliest poems written were from the mythology and heroic legends of Greece: and to these were gradually added others from Eastern, Western, and Northern sources. The next idea which occurred was to make half of the stories be taken from the Greek, and half from non-Greek, or what might be broadly described as romantic literature. To create a possible or plausible common setting for both groups, he fell back on his favourite fancy of a continued thread of living Greek tradition coming down almost to the end of the Middle Ages among Greek-speaking people, and overlapping the full development of romanticism in Western Europe. It was but a fancy, yet one which had real analogies in history. The Greek epic, it is true, ends in the fifth century; but Greek poetry went on being written certainly till the eleventh; and the collection of minor poetry known as the Anthology owes its final form to a Byzantine scholar who was ambassador to Venice at the time of Edward III.'s accession to the crown of England, and was probably still alive when Chaucer was born. Byzantine Greeks of the fourteenth century inherited a continuous literary tradition regarding the incidents and characters of the ancient Greek epic, which can be traced upwards to compilers of the second and third centuries, and again through these to mythographers who may have been the contemporaries of Herodotus. Given, then, this living tradition of early Greece, inherited by some outlying fragment of the Greek speech and blood such as actually existed for some hundreds of years in Central Asia, for some hundreds more in Southern Russia, and might conceivably have existed in some remote ocean fastness much longer: given a sufficient reason for the inheritors of this tradi-

tion being joined, in their forgotten island, by a group of mixed Western blood, Germanic, Norse, and Celtic, bearing with them the mass of stories current in their own time throughout Western Europe; and a setting is provided in which may be rationally included any story in the world. Make this reason a combination of the Norse explorations of the Atlantic and the earliest discoveries of America with the flight out of a land stricken with the Black Death, and there results the whole idea and structure of "The Earthly Paradise."

It is worth while calling attention to this simple yet elaborate artifice of structure on more than one ground; partly because of the care with which Morris worked it out in detail, as a piece, one might say, of architectural construction; partly because, unless it be kept in mind, much of the meaning of "The Earthly Paradise," and of the special fitness of the stories in it as regards both substance and manner, is of necessity lost. It is, for instance, one of the commonest criticisms made on the Greek stories in "The Earthly Paradise," that the atmosphere and treatment are not Greek but mediæval; that the feelings, incidents, and decoration are neither those of classical poetry, nor yet of the stories of ancient Greece as interpreted and modernized by the taste of the present day. This is precisely true, and precisely what Morris meant. Ancient Greek poetry he admired for its own qualities, and appreciated more than is generally known—a criticism which he once made on Pindar showed insight much greater than that of the average classical scholar—but its way was not his way; and still less his way was the sort of modernization, beautiful and touching as that is, which other poets of this age have applied to the Greek legends—the method of Tennyson in "Oenone" or

"Tiresias," the method of Matthew Arnold in "Empedocles," the method of Mr. Swinburne in "Atalanta in Calydon." To Morris the mediæval method—using the term to cover the whole period of four or five centuries from the age of the *chansons de geste* and the Icelandic epic to the close of the Middle Ages in Chaucer—was beyond all question or comparison the best; was so much the best that it was practically the only one. To adopt this method, however naturally it came to him, without warning, and, as it were, in the air, would put a needless strain on the intelligence of his public. It was prepared for, nay more, it was rendered both natural and appropriate, by this device of laying the scene of the stories themselves at the end of the fourteenth century, and telling them as they would have been told then: as they were in fact told then in Western Europe, but with the greater sweetness of tone and purity of line, the less mystic or fantastic turn, which might be expected from a purely Greek tradition; and with something also of that stately Greek melancholy which seems inherent in the Hellenic blood, and clings, the shadow of its brightness, to the whole of ancient Greek poetry from Homer to Theocritus.

Nor was this the only advantage gained by placing the scene of the poems in the age of Chaucer. Any earlier time would have cut him off from some of the great tales of the world; from that, for instance, of "The Hill of Venus," which is of late mediæval origin, and cannot be traced further back than the fourteenth century: and any later time would have made the Chaucerian manner inappropriate and unhistorical. The next step that poetry took in Europe, after the close of the Middle Ages, was to entangle itself in rhetoric on the one hand, in classicalism on the other;

and classicalism and rhetoric, admirable as are some of the results they have produced, were just the two things that Morris could not bear. In the scheme of "The Earthly Paradise" as it stands, the two corner stones are the Greek and the northern epic cycles, the two greatest bodies of imaginative narration which the world has produced. The stories which he chose out of both are told by Greeks and by Norsemen of the later Middle Ages, in the form in which they would then have been imagined and in the manner which, to his mind, was the best of all manners. But alongside of these great fountainheads were other sources, European and Oriental; and for these also, subject to the same conditions, a place is found by simple and probable devices. Among the adventurers who had started on the search for eternal youth are Laurence the Swabian, who knows the mediæval chronicles, and Nicholas the Breton, who is familiar with the French epics. Rolf himself, the Norseman who heads the expedition, had spent his youth at Byzantium, where his father was an officer of the Varangian Guard, and in that meeting-place of East and West has heard the stories which became familiar to Europe later through the Arabian Nights. The field of story thus laid open was in fact almost too large, was at all events too large to be fully utilized. Oriental sources were but little drawn upon. The Persian heroic cycle, which Morris placed next in interest after the epics of Greece and Scandinavia, is left wholly untouched; and a single story, that of "The Man who never Laughed again," was taken with much hesitation from the Arabic. Even in dealing with purely European sources much was set aside, including the whole immense mass of the Arthurian cycle. The Breton who sails in search of the Earthly Paradise dies on the voyage; and the

story of "Ogier the Dane," coming from him at second hand, is the only one in the whole work which is derived from Celtic sources. The mythology of Ireland (with which Morris was less in sympathy) never appears at all.

This architectural design of a great body of poetry, an immense variety of subject brought by certain dominating conceptions within a single method and common scope, grew up gradually in his mind: but meanwhile the poems themselves were being produced with extraordinary speed. Among the earliest written were three from Greek sources, which had strangely different fortunes, but were alike in this, that none of them finally appeared in "The Earthly Paradise." The subjects were Orpheus and Eurydice, the Quest of the Golden Fleece, and the life of the half mythical Dorian chief, Aristomenes of Messene. These were written in 1866. For the first, which was completed, but still remains unpublished, Burne-Jones made an elaborate series of designs. The "Aristomenes" was never finished. Morris had been attracted to the story by the obviously and indeed startlingly romantic features which it bears as briefly told by Pausanias. Greece proper had had its own period of an early romanticism. For the most part it was crushed out, partly by the literary supremacy of Athens, and partly by the contempt for literature of all kinds which was natural to Greeks of the pure Dorian blood: and this is one of a few instances in which it has survived through, and reappeared after, the classical period. But in spite of this, and of the further pleasure that it gave him to think of the Spartans being outfought and outwitted, the story was too unsubstantial for history, and at the same time too historical to allow free play for invention. He felt that it did not ac-

commodate itself to vaguely romantic treatment, and that to deal with it properly he should first have to visit Greece. It was dropped at the time; was afterwards taken up again more than once some eight or ten years later, but was finally abandoned. The only part of it which has ever been printed is a fragment of about a hundred and fifty lines which he published, or allowed to be published, in the Athenæum for the 13th of May, 1876.

The fortunes of the Quest of the Golden Fleece were very different. The story, in itself one of the richest and most splendid out of the whole Greek mythology, and capable of almost indefinite expansion in detail, grew on his hands till it became obvious that it had outgrown its destined place. Its length, which is between that of the Æneid and the Odyssey, reached the scale of the regular epic. It was separately published in June, 1867, under the title of "The Life and Death of Jason."

The success of "Jason" was immediate and great. In those years Tennyson reigned almost without a rival; but people had grown weary of his imitators, and his own inspiration no longer, in the opinion of many admirers, kept pace with the elaborate beauty of his execution. It was time for new poetry. The appearance, two years before, of "Atalanta in Calydon" had roused a tempest of excitement and applause. It was felt that a new generation had arisen. This new poem of "The Life and Death of Jason," in which the refinement and charm of mature art were combined with the reawakened sense of romanticism, with extraordinary fertility of movement and incident, end with a largeness, straightforwardness, and sweetnass that were all its own, found an audience ready for it. It had just enough of archaism or mannerism

to interest critics without rousing their ridicule. When the Pall Mall Gazette, then the great arbiter of cultured opinion, could find little in "Jason" to condemn beyond an "indifference to manners" shown in the passage where "Medea obtains her first interview with Jason by knocking unexpectedly at his chamber door" (instead, we must infer, of sending him a note by the footman), its fortunes with the critics were secured. Morris's name began to be mentioned with respect. People were even led to assume a knowledge of his earlier work of which they were wholly innocent. "No one," observed one of the leading daily newspapers in a eulogistic notice of "The Life and Death of Jason," "acquainted with Mr. Morris's previous volume will be surprised to find that he has again chosen a classical subject." No testimony could be more eloquent than this to the feebleness of the impression made on the public by "The Defence of Guenevere." It may be true that, as another review of "Jason" states, the earlier volume had gradually gained for itself an increasing audience; but that audience even now might be counted by scores or dozens, and the first edition was still not nearly exhausted. With "The Life and Death of Jason" Morris reached real popularity. A second edition (in which numerous corrections were made) was called for almost immediately; and thereafter a steady sale led to successive reprints. The poem received a final revision from the author in the eighth edition, published fifteen years after its original appearance.

Indifferent as Morris habitually was to criticism, the reception which "The Life and Death of Jason" met with was a source of no little encouragement and pleasure, as that of "The Defence of Guenevere" had undoubtedly been chilling, and had even joined

with other reasons to make him for a time lay aside poetry. The fortunes of the "Jason" were an index to the public reception of the longer work, with which he had already made large progress, and in the course of which, as in the course of all long labours, there were periods when he grew discouraged.

"Naturally I am in good spirits after the puffs," he writes on the 20th of June, "but I reserve any huge delight till I see what the 'Pall Mall' and 'Saturday' say, one of which is pretty sure to act Advocatus Diaboli. However I fancy I shall do pretty well now; last week I had made up my mind that I shouldn't be able to publish 'The Earthly Paradise' and was very low: I am as anxious as you are to get on with that work, and am going to set to work hard now. I hope you won't let any rubbish pass without collaring it. I am too old now for that kind of game."

The seriousness of mind which had been so remarkable in him from the first comes out here again. No great artist was ever less self-conscious about his own work, more absolutely free from either vanity or fatuity. But it was matter of simple duty with him, in a poem as in a design for decoration, to do everything he did as well as he could. It was not with him a matter of inspiration—he never used either the word or the idea—but of sheer honesty and seriousness of workmanship. "That's jolly!" he would say of a piece of his own work, with the same simplicity as if it were anything else that he admired: yet on the other hand he never spoke, or apparently thought, of poetry as involving more than the craftsman's qualities: singleness of eye, trained aptitude of hand, and such integrity of mind as would not consciously produce "rubbish," or slip it in unnoticed among really honest work. "That talk of inspiration is sheer nonsense, I may

tell you that flat," he once said in later years when poetry, not his own, was being discussed: "there is no such thing: it is a mere matter of craftsmanship." The idea that poetry could, or should, be cultivated as an isolated and specific artistic product, or that towards its production it was desirable to isolate one's self from common interests and occupations, and stand a little apart from all the turmoils or trivialities of common life, was one which he found not so much untrue as unintelligible. "If a chap can't compose an epic poem while he's weaving tapestry," he once said, "he had better shut up, he'll never do any good at all."

In the fresh satisfaction of seeing "The Life and Death of Jason" in print, and finding that it had given him a recognized position among the English poets, he resumed work on "The Earthly Paradise" with renewed heart, and the speed and sustained excellence of his production for the rest of the year were even for him phenomenal. The verse flowed off his pen. Seven hundred lines were once composed in a single day. During part of the Long Vacation Mr. and Mrs. Burne-Jones and their children were living at Oxford, where Faulkner stayed up and had his mother and sister with him. The Morrises were also there, in lodgings in Beaumont Street, he going up to London now and then for the day to look after the business. Every evening he would read aloud what he had written that day. There were excursions on the river in golden summer weather, long remembered as the happiest in more lives than one. Two of them are recorded in the lovely introductory verses to June and August in "The Earthly Paradise." The first of these recalls a day on the lonely and beautiful upper river, where issuing from the sad marshland, it takes the

steel-blue Windrush by the Gothic arches of New Bridge, passes all in loops and links to Eynsham, and curves round the Wytham hills through the meadows of the Evenlode. His later home by these upper waters was then unknown ; it was with a strange premonition of it that he wrote now—

> What better place than this then could we find
> By this sweet stream that knows not of the sea,
> That guesses not the city's misery,
> This little stream whose hamlets scarce have names,
> This far-off, lonely mother of the Thames ?

The other excursion was down the river to Dorchester, on a day of burning splendour in late August. The long Abbey Church, the weir by Day's Lock, and the huge prehistoric fortifications on Sinodun Hill and across the meadow-land girt by the arc of the river, are there now unchanged, though havoc has been made among the willow beds, and the kingfisher is seldom seen by the weir.

> Across the gap made by our English hinds,
> Amidst the Roman's handiwork, behold
> Far off the long-roofed church ; the shepherd binds
> The withy round the hurdles of his fold,
> Down in the foss the river fed of old,
> That through long lapse of time has grown to be
> The little grassy valley that you see.
>
> Rest here awhile, not yet the eve is still,
> The bees are wandering yet, and you may hear
> The barley mowers on the trenched hill,
> The sheep-bells, and the restless changing weir,
> All little sounds made musical and clear
> Beneath the sky that burning August gives,
> While yet the thought of glorious summer lives.

Even when Morris had to go up to his business at Queen Square he always returned with sheet on sheet of fresh manuscript : and it was for this river party that he brought down with him, and read aloud by

the riverside, "The Story of the Wanderers," the prologue of "The Earthly Paradise" in its second or published form. There could be no more striking instance of his seriousness of workmanship, and his determination not to "let any rubbish pass," than his resolution to rewrite this story wholly and its completely successful result. The earlier and unpublished version is still extant. It had been composed nearly two years before, and still laboured under the defects of his earlier poetry; unevenness in transitions, a lumbering structure, awkward and often needlessly violent rhythm and diction. What pains Morris took to form a style, as people would say—to get his work right, as he would himself have rather termed it—can be judged from comparison of the two: this crude and laboured poem, and the later version with its quiet refinement, its grace of diction, the melodious music of its verse.

Summer ended; and still the flow of rhyme continued as powerful and as sweet. By the spring of 1868 at least seventeen of the twenty-four tales which were proposed for the complete design had been written: The Son of Crœsus, Cupid and Psyche, Pygmalion and the Image, The Man Born to be King, Atalanta's Race, The Story of Perseus, The Watching of the Falcon, The Lady of the Land, The Writing on the Image, The Proud King, The Love of Alcestis, Ogier the Dane, The King's Treasure House, Orpheus and Eurydice, The Fortunes of Gyges, The Dolphins and the Lovers, and The Story of St. Dorothea. The method of publication had been much discussed. The first idea was to produce the complete work in one folio volume, with woodcuts from designs by Burne-Jones. Of these there were to be no less than five hundred. The greatest achievements of the Kelmscott Press

were more than anticipated in this project; but it was a generation too soon. The art of producing books had sunk to a deplorable condition, and it became evident that the proposed work was impossible without the organized labour of years. The poet and the designer were prepared with their part; but the type-founder, the compositor, the printer, the wood-engraver, had all to be educated. Upwards of a hundred designs for pictures, including a complete set for the story of Cupid and Psyche, were made by Burne-Jones; and many of them were cut by Morris himself and the professional or amateur workers for the firm, who were still employed, with the old simple audacity, to do their best without any regular training. Morris himself worked hard at wood-cutting, and, according to the opinion of experts, improved rapidly, and at last did it very well. One of these woodcuts, representing the scene of Psyche borne off by Zephyrus, has recently been published as a frontispiece to Mr. S. C. Cockerell's history of the Kelmscott Press. As to the wood-cutting, Mr. George Wardle writes to me:

"Mr. Morris asked me soon after this to put on wood some drawings Burne-Jones was then making for illustration of the Cupid and Psyche. I was very glad to do so; and here began an experience often repeated when I came to know more of the ways of the firm. It was practically impossible to get the drawings properly cut. Perhaps if Mr. Morris could have given the price which a first-rate cutter would have charged for doing the work with his own hand, they might have come out as they were drawn, but in the ordinary course of the trade it was impossible: I think also that same 'course' would have prevented the arrangement, had there been no other difficulty.

"Mr. Morris asked me then if I would try to cut

these blocks. This I did, and after a few experiments, he was well enough pleased to give me one and then another; but after that I got no more, and wondered for a while why, as I thought the second was certainly better than the first. The reason was, Mr. Morris became possessed by the idea of cutting the blocks himself: and he took them all in hand and carried them through, not without some lively scenes in Queen Square. He cut with great ardour and with much knowledge, but the work did not always go to his mind. It was necessarily slow and he was constitutionally quick: there were then quarrels between them."

But when two trial sheets of the folio "Earthly Paradise" were set up at the Chiswick Press, the effect was very discouraging. The page, while not without a certain quality of distinction, suffers from technical defects, in both typography and woodcuts, which are all the more emphasized by the high mark aimed at. Two etchings made by Burne-Jones for the story of "The Ring given to Venus" were not considered more satisfactory in their result as decoration for a page. Gradually, with labour and patience, these difficulties might have been remedied; but only at immense cost and after years of delay. The scheme was therefore laid aside, though not abandoned. "The Earthly Paradise" appeared in the ordinary form: but the great edition of it was on the verge of being realized at the author's death. "To the very last," Sir Edward Burne-Jones writes, "we held to our first idea, and hoped yet to see the book published in the Kelmscott Press in all the fulness of its first design."

Notwithstanding the high pressure of his poetry, the records of the firm show that his work as a

decorator was pursued with unremitting diligence. The following letter is addressed to Mr. Guy with reference to the projected decoration of the Chapel in the Forest School at Walthamstow.

"26, Queen Square,
"Nov. 25th, 1867.

"My dear Guy,

'The plan I think perfectly applicable to mosaic, but of course the designs want making out—avoid anything *spiky* in mosaic, it is too easy, and looks so. I don't think it is worth while using the material unless the work is very elaborate; and there ought to be a great deal of gold in it; the part between the bands ought also to be at least of marble or alabaster. I don't want to discourage any reasonable plan, but I should think panelling the proper thing for your east end, picked out with colour and gold if you please; the next best I should think would be hangings. I scarcely fancy mosaics on such a small scale, and they are the proper decorations of curved surfaces, domes, and are the concomitants of a round-arched style and great magnificence of decoration in general. But on the whole panelling is the thing; couldn't your friend paint some figures and things on the panels? Anyhow, I will help if you wish it, with the designs, whatever you settle on.

"I have to thank you very much for your friendliness with reference to Jason—it makes me laugh to be in the position of nuisance to schoolboys.

"Yours very truly,
"W. Morris."

This same November Burne-Jones had left Kensington for the house in which he lived for the rest of his

life, The Grange, in North End Lane, Fulham, then a pleasant quiet place with great elms in the road and surrounded by fields and market-gardens. "As this removed us further from him," he writes, "I wrote and proposed that he and Webb should come every Sunday to bind us together. A letter he wrote in answer was more full of warm response than he often permitted himself. This was the beginning of our Sundays. There were times of discontinuance, at first, for one reason or another. But for all the later years it was his weekly custom that he should come to breakfast and spend the morning: then we planned our work and talked of our schemes; and so it continued till the end. The last three Sundays of his life I went to him."

At the beginning of 1868, the plan of a single-volume "Earthly Paradise" in a costly form having been given up, arrangements were made for printing the first half of the work and issuing it separately. It was then meant that the whole work should be in two volumes. But the second half turned out to be so much longer than the first that it had to be broken up and separately issued in two portions, as Part III. and Part IV.: the volume of 1868 comprising Parts I. and II. The reissue in four volumes, each containing one of the four seasons, was only made some years later. The agreement for publication, which is dated the 6th of February, 1868, specifies the whole work as extending to about 34,000 lines. It actually exceeded 42,000.

"To-day," writes Morris on the 3rd of February, "I took first piece of copy to printer. Yesterday I wrote 33 stanzas of Pygmalion. If you want my company (usually considered of no use to anybody but the owner) please say so. I believe I shall get on so

fast with my work that I shall be able to idle." The book went through the press without delay, and was published at the end of April. The only decoration was the well-known woodcut on the title-page of the three women playing on instruments. It was cut by Morris himself from Burne-Jones's drawing; it does not, however, represent the best of what he could do in wood-cutting.

"The Earthly Paradise" was published by Mr. F. S. Ellis, whose recent acquaintance with Morris had already become a warm friendship. Their relations as author and publisher were ended in 1885 by Mr. Ellis's retirement from business, but they remained attached friends through the rest of Morris's life; Mr. Ellis was much with him in his last illness and was one of his executors. The acquaintance had begun about the year 1864. Mr. Ellis was then in business in King Street, Covent Garden, principally as a dealer in manuscripts and rare printed books. Morris was first brought there by Swinburne, and afterwards often looked in on his way from Red Lion Square to London Bridge Station when he was going down to Upton in the evening. When he came to live in London his visits grew more frequent and less hurried. His knowledge of and admiration for fifteenth-century printing, generally thought of as a new development of his later years, was then already fully grown.

"The first dealing of any importance," Mr. Ellis writes, "that we had, was over a very fine copy of the 1473 Ulm edition of Boccaccio's 'De Claris Mulieribus' with the famous woodcuts. I had bought it at a sale in Paris for £23—considered in those days to be quite an extravagant price." (The volume would now fetch at least three times as much.) "It was a very fine clean crisp copy bound in sixteenth-century vellum

stained yellow. This took his fancy hugely but, the price which I asked, £26 or thereabouts, was a matter for consideration, and he asked me to keep the book till he could bring a friend to advise with him. In a day or two he called in company with his friend, a pale and fragile-looking young man. This was Burne-Jones. 'Buy the book by all means,' was the advice of the counsellor; 'how much better worth it is than any number of books of less value.' Years afterwards this volume was sacrificed at the altar of Socialism, and passed into the hands of a wealthy collector, who stripped off its yellow cover and put it into a gorgeous modern binding."

When the first edition of "Jason" was published in 1867, Morris gave a copy to Ellis, remarking that it was hard luck to have to publish a poem at one's own expense. Bell and Daldy, the publishers of the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine and of "The Defence of Guenevere," had brought "Jason" out, and in view of their experiences with the earlier volume it was not surprising that they should decline to undertake any risk. But when the first edition was exhausted, as it was within a few months, Mr. Ellis had become his adviser, and the publishers paid a substantial sum for the right to print a second. After this second edition, "Jason" was transferred to Ellis, who had already entered into an agreement to publish "The Earthly Paradise." It may be added, that the sale of the first volume of "The Earthly Paradise" proved so satisfactory that this first agreement was cancelled, and replaced by another which gave to the author a larger share in the profits.

"How much," Mr. Ellis writes to me, "I owe of the bright side of life to him I cannot reckon. He was the very soul of honour, truthfulness, and justice.

Not only would he never deviate from the truth, but in thinking carefully over the matter I do not remember him ever to have made plausible excuses for doing or not doing a thing—he would always say straightforwardly exactly what he meant." The relation of author and publisher, so often one of jealousy and discontent, was in this case without a shadow. Mr. Ellis is even willing to generalize from his own experience: "any publisher," he adds, "unless he be dishonest, can get on with an author, whose books sell, with perfect ease. Difficulties and heartburnings usually arise with authors whose books will not sell." Publishers, as a body, have a bad name with the general vague opinion of the public. That this is so, seems mainly due to a fault for which they are indeed responsible, but responsible only in the second degree —their readiness, for the sake of small but secure gains, to abet incompetent authors in forcing essentially unsaleable books upon the market.

At the end of the first volume of "The Earthly Paradise" was an announcement of the contents of the second, or concluding, volume. The twelve new tales there promised were as follows: six from Greek sources; The Story of Theseus, Orpheus and Eurydice, The Story of Rhodope, The Dolphins and the Lovers, The Fortunes of Gyges, and The Story of Bellerophon: other six from mediæval sources, Eastern or Western; The Hill of Venus, The Man who never Laughed again, The Palace East of the Sun, Dorothea, The Ring given to Venus, and Amis and Amillion. But after the publication of the first volume the scheme underwent large changes, partly from his replacing a number of the stories already written or planned by others, and partly from the introduction into his life, where it soon took a place second to no other interest, of the heroic

literature of Iceland. The first-fruits of this new field appeared in the next portion of "The Earthly Paradise" published. Of the six stories it contained, only three belonged to the original scheme: The Story of Rhodope; The Palace East of the Sun, with its title altered to "The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon"; and the single story drawn from Oriental sources, The Man who never Laughed again. To fill the remaining three places, two short Greek stories, "Acontius and Cydippe," and "The Death of Paris," were brought up from his reserve stores, and replaced the long and elaborate tales of Orpheus and Theseus, for which there was not room; and ending the volume, on a scale more than double that of any of the tales hitherto printed, came the noble version of the Laxdaela Saga, entitled "The Lovers of Gudrun."

In the eighteen months which passed between the appearance of this and of the earlier volume a silent revolution had been effected in the poet. It was not at once realized, even by himself. Yet here and there a critic observed that the Chaucerian manner which had been so unqualified in "Jason" and so powerful in the earlier stories of "The Earthly Paradise" was wearing off, and a new manner replacing it. Some deepening of the poetry they felt there was. What it really meant was a development of capital importance, the transformation of romance into epic. There will be occasion to mark the further progress of this change in the final volume of "The Earthly Paradise" and in "Sigurd the Volsung." But "The Lovers of Gudrun," his first essay in epic poetry, is in its way as complete and as satisfying as any of his later achievements. Between this poem and the story of "The Man Born to be King," a perfect example of the pure

romance, there is in truth no comparison possible. They cannot be weighed in the same scales.

Criticism may reasonably point out this distinction, than which none in literature is really more fundamental. But Morris himself, who was an artist and not a critic, never took pains to emphasize the difference of the two methods. What he cared for was the work done; and with all his intolerance for bad work, or work that he conceived to be bad, he had the largest catholicity of admiration for work that he conceived to be good; for the Chanson de Roland or the Roman de la Rose, for the Heimskringla or the Arabian Nights, for Beowulf, or Froissart, or the Shah Nameh. This catholicity, and this carelessness to distinguish among forms of art which from his central and unentangled outlook he perceived to be threaded from one centre though they might lie on widely-severed arcs, are alike well shown in a letter which he wrote many years later. A German student had written to him from Marburg asking whether it were true, as the text-books said, that Chaucer had been his model, and expressing his own doubt on the matter.

"I quite agree," Morris answered, "as to the resemblance of my work to Chaucer; it only comes of our both using the narrative method: and even then my turn is decidedly more to Romance than was Chaucer's. I admit that I have been a great admirer of Chaucer, and that his work has had, especially in early years, much influence on me; but I think not much on my style. In fact I cannot think that I ever consciously aimed at any particular style. I by nature turn to Romance rather than classicalism, and naturally, without effort, shrink from rhetoric. I may say that I am fairly steeped in mediævalism generally; but the

Icelandic Sagas, our own Border Ballads, and Froissart (through Berners' translation of about 1520) have had as much influence over me as (or more than) anything else. I have translated a great deal from the Icelandic, a little from old French; and of late have translated Beowulf, for which I have a very great admiration."

It is obvious that the term "mediævalism" is used here in a very largely extended meaning. It includes Beowulf and the Elder Edda on the one hand, and Chaucer and the Border Ballads on the other. As regards Morris's special relation to Chaucer, nothing need be added to his own published utterances. They are three in number. One is the famous apostrophe to Chaucer in the seventeenth book of "The Life and Death of Jason":

——Would that I
Had but some portion of that mastery
That from the rose-hung lanes of woody Kent
Through these five hundred years such songs have sent
To us, who, meshed within this smoky net
Of unrejoicing labour, love them yet.
And thou, O Master! Yea, my Master still,
Whatever feet have scaled Parnassus' hill,
Since like thy measures, clear and sweet and strong,
Thames' stream scarce fettered drave the dace along
Unto the bastioned bridge, his only chain—
O Master, pardon me if yet in vain
Thou art my Master, and I fail to bring
Before men's eyes the image of the thing
My heart is filled with: thou whose dreamy eyes
Beheld the flush to Cressid's cheeks arise,
When Troilus rode up the praising street,
As clearly as they saw thy townsmen meet
Those who in vineyards of Poictou withstood
The glittering horror of the steel-topped wood.

The second is in the less known, but more intimately beautiful *Envoi* to "The Earthly Paradise":

That land's name, say'st thou? and the road thereto?
Nay, Book, thou mockest, saying thou know'st it not;
Surely no book of verse I ever knew
But ever was the heart within him hot
To gain the Land of Matters Unforgot—
There, now we both laugh—as the whole world may,
At us poor singers of an empty day.

Nay, let it pass, and hearken! Hast thou heard
That therein I believe I have a friend,
Of whom for love I may not be afeard?
It is to him indeed I bid thee wend;
Yea, he perchance may meet thee ere thou end,
Dying so far off from the hedge of bay,
Thou idle singer of an empty day!

Well, think of him, I bid thee, on the road,
And if it hap that midst of thy defeat,
Fainting beneath thy follies' heavy load,
My Master, Geoffry Chaucer, thou do meet,
Then shalt thou win a space of rest full sweet;
Then be thou bold, and speak the words I say,
The idle singer of an empty day!

"O Master, O thou great of heart and tongue,
Thou well mayst ask me why I wander here,
In raiment rent of stories oft besung!
But of thy gentleness draw thou anear,
And then the heart of one who held thee dear
Mayst thou behold! So near as that I lay
Unto the singer of an empty day.

"O Master, if thine heart could love us yet,
Spite of things left undone, and wrongly done,
Some place in loving hearts then should we get,
For thou, sweet-souled, didst never stand alone,
But knew'st the joy and woe of many an one—
By lovers dead, who live through thee, we pray,
Help thou us singers of an empty day!"

The last and the most emphatic of the three tributes of devotion paid by Morris to his master is the Kelmscott edition of Chaucer's works, the occupation and

delight of his latest years, and the final masterpiece of his multiform production.

Soon after the publication of the first part of "The Earthly Paradise," Charles Cowden Clarke wrote to him a letter of warm and sympathetic praise. "Your intimacy with Chaucer especially," he said, "riveted me the moment I felt your appeal; and I am sure that you would not have had a more devoted admirer, and Brother in the faith of Love and Beauty, than in my beloved friend and schoolfellow, John Keats, whom I all but taught his letters." In his reply, Morris speaks of "Keats, for whom I have such boundless admiration, and whom I venture to call one of my masters." It will be easily recognized that while the world which he elected to make his own was largely that of Chaucer, his poetical affinities were with Keats more than with any other poet.

The beginning of Morris's Icelandic studies can be definitely fixed in this year. It coincides with what might be called the final extinction of Rossetti's influence over him as an artist, and the gradual loosening which followed of the closer intimacy between them, though for several years more they still saw much of each other, and for three years, from 1871 to 1874, had a country house in common. The autumn holiday of 1868 was spent by the Morrises at Southwold—a memory of it is in the lovely introductory stanzas for October in "The Earthly Paradise"—and on his return to London he plunged into the study of Icelandic under the guidance of Mr. Magnússon. Till then he had known little of the subject at first hand; Dasent's "Burnt Njal" and "Gisli" were familiar to him, and of the other Sagas he had some general knowledge. Now he began their systematic study. The first Icelandic book he read with Magnússon was the

Eyrbyggja Saga. Within a few months he had gone through the bulk of the heroic literature. In the introduction to the translation of the Grettis Saga, published in April, 1869, there is a brief critical analysis of the literature, showing that it had been essentially mastered. So early as January, 1869, Morris and Magnússon's translation of the Saga of Gunnlaug Worm-tongue had been published in the Fortnightly Review. And all the while the output of new poems for the remaining part of "The Earthly Paradise" was going on almost unchecked. "Bellerophon" was written in March: "Gudrun's Lovers," begun immediately after the publication of the "Grettis Saga," was finished by June. The treatment of the Bellerophon legend clearly shows the epic manner rising beside and partially overmastering the romantic.

In the autumn, Mrs. Morris's delicate health led to their spending nearly two months at Bad-Ems. From there he wrote to Ellis on the 11th of August:

"Many thanks for your kind letter which was very welcome. If you are not joking I hope indeed you will come to Ems; I think you might even fish there; at any rate I have seen with my own eyes Germans catching small bream in the Lahn, and as they never strike when they have a bite, it is probable that the fish are very hungry. We have had pike and perch to eat withal, so I suppose those monsters inhabit the rather muddy waters of the Lahn: just at Ems it is all widened out into a kind of pond with nearly no stream, but from Ems to Nassau, about six miles (English), there is no lock, and the water runs in rapids. I am sorry for your disappointment at Lechlade, but at all events it is a jolly place. The country about here is very beautiful, there is no doubt of that, and the place itself I shall consider bearable if it does my wife any

good, as I hope it will. I have been pretty hard at work, have finished one tale, and begun another since I left, so the book goes on."

"Many thanks for your letter again," he writes a week later, "and the Temple Bar, which did not excoriate my thin hide in spite of a tender contempt with which Mr. Austin seemed to regard me. Commercially I suppose I ought to be grateful to him and am so; from the critical point of view I think there is so much truth as this in his article, as that we poets of to-day have been a good deal made by those of the Byron and Shelley time—however, in another sixty years or so, when it won't matter three skips of a louse to us (as it don't matter much more now), I suppose we shall quietly fall into our places. I get about three hours' walk (with a pocket-book, Mr. Publisher) every morning, and am in roaring and offensive health, keeping country hours, woke by the band (with a hymn-tune) at seven every morning and going to bed at ten every night. I shall want about a fortnight after I come home before I begin to feed the free burgher of Berwick-upon-Tweed with my immortal MS., and after that I hope there will be no hitch. Believe me, the longest and heaviest of sticks is buzzing about my ears, as you would find out if you had passed a week at this skin-'em-alive place; I'm not quite sure now if I shan't have to be sold to the Prussian government to sweep up horse-dung in Ems streets (they are very particular about it)—my God, what a bad bargain I should be!

"I have not got any good wine at Ems, and perhaps they don't charge for such as they sell you! but the Grunhauser at Cologne and Coblentz was jolly that hot weather. Did you ever speculate as to what they fed German sheep on? deep thought at breakfast time has led me to suppose india-rubber to be their

pabulum—this is not very encouraging to your journey to Ems, but you see my wife is not strong enough to get to the restaurants here; I daresay we could get a tolerable dinner there.

"Fishing I have not tried yet; I am too lazy to look up proper baits. The inside of a roll would be about as far as I should care to go. They don't seem to understand gentles at Ems; nor have I seen anybody trying either worms or minnow, though there must be perch here somewhere; I have seen some big chubs about."

The Ems landscape a little later in his stay is described by him in the introductory lines to "The Death of Paris" in "The Earthly Paradise":

> The level ground along the river-side
> Was merry through the day with sounds of those
> Who gathered apples; o'er the stream arose
> The northward-looking slopes where the swine ranged
> Over the fields that hook and scythe had changed
> Since the last month; but 'twixt the tree boles grey
> Above them did they see the terraced way,
> And over that the vine-stocks, row on row,
> Whose dusty leaves, well thinned and yellowing now,
> But little hid the bright-bloomed vine-bunches.

During this visit Rossetti made a facetious drawing of Morris reading aloud to his wife, entitling it "The Ms at Ems": the drawing and the title both gave great satisfaction to the circle.

After his return in September, Part III. of "The Earthly Paradise" began to go to press, and was published in December. By that time the whole cycle was practically complete, and for Part IV., though it was not issued till a year later, little remained to be done beyond revision and selection of poems already written. As it finally appeared, that volume contained the "Bellerophon," written early in 1869, and now divided

on the ground of its great length into two parts, "Bellerophon in Argos" and "Bellerophon in Lycia"; "The Golden Apples," a brief and rather vague rendering of the story of the eleventh labour of Hercules: two mediæval subjects of the earlier semi-mystical manner, "The Ring given to Venus" and "The Hill of Venus": and another northern poem, "The Fostering of Aslaug," in which the old and new manners are combined with exceptional skill and unique fascination.

Thus "The Earthly Paradise" stood complete. It may not be inappropriate to add a brief account of the sources from which the stories are derived. For the Greek stories little use was made by Morris of recondite authors; and indeed the whole body of Græco-Roman mythology has long been so fully explored, and so systematically set forth in dictionaries, that it is accessible to all the world alike. The only one of the twelve tales which is not generally familiar is "The Story of Rhodope." It is founded on a romantic story related by Strabo and Ælian of the beautiful Thracian slave, Rhodôpis of Naucratis, who received imperishable fame from the sisterly jealousy of Sappho, and who became strangely identified in legend with Queen Netaqerti of Egypt, the traditional builder of the Third Pyramid nearly three thousand years before. Morris turned the name Rhodôpis into Rhodope by pure inadvertence, and was a good deal vexed when he found out the mistake. But the poem was then published, and there was no help for it.

For the non-classical stories the originals are at once more various and less matter of common knowledge. "The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon" was suggested to Morris by Thorpe's "Yule-tide Stories," a book already mentioned as having

been one of his particular favourites at Oxford. It occurs there under the title of "The Beautiful Palace East of the Sun," with references given to original sources (principally the Volunda Saga), and to variant versions. The latter part of the story in "The Earthly Paradise," however, diverges entirely from the story in Thorpe, and is founded partly on a French romance and partly on the Arabian Nights; and the remarkable framework of the story, an involution of dream within dream through shadowy transmigrations of personality, is wholly the poet's own. The two stories of "The Lady of the Land" and "The Watching of the Falcon" are both from Mandeville's "Voiage and Travell," chapters iv. and xiii. The name of the former story Morris took without change; the latter comes in Mandeville under the title of "The Castle of the Sperhauk." "The Proud King" is from the "Gesta Romanorum," c. 57 of the French, and c. 23 of the English version: and "The Man Born to be King" mainly from the same (c. 20 of the French, and c. 48 of the English), supplemented from the more elaborate version of the same story in the thirteenth-century French romance of the Emperor Coustans (Nouvelles Françoises en prose du XIIIme Siècle, 1856), and with some further details from the story of St. Pelagius in Caxton's "Golden Legend." The edition of the French version of the "Gesta" used by Morris was Brunet's of 1858, and that of the English Madden's of 1838. The stories of "The Writing on the Image" and "The Ring given to Venus" are both from William of Malmesbury, in the second book of the "De Gestis Regum Anglorum": the former is there related of the celebrated scholar, theologian, and mathematician, Gerbert of Aurillac, afterwards Pope Silvester II., known to the mediæval imagination as

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a great magician like Michael Scott. The story of "Ogier the Dane" follows pretty closely the fourteenth-century French romance of "Ogier le Danois." "The Hill of Venus" was suggested by the version of this very widely diffused legend given in Tieck's "Romances." The story of "The Man who never Laughed again" is substantially that of the fifth Wezeer in the story of "The King and his Son and the Damsel and the Seven Wezeers," as given in the twenty-first chapter of Lane's Arabian Nights. "The Fostering of Aslaug" follows closely the story as epitomized from the older sources in Thorpe's "Northern Mythology." "The Lovers of Gudrun" was taken directly from the original Icelandic of the Laxdaela Saga.

It must be understood that the stories as they reshaped themselves in Morris's mind often became quite different from the form in which they are given in the older sources, and that, except in the case of the great legends where no material change is possible, he gave his imagination free play in re-shaping and combining them. It might happen that, as in the stories of Aslaug and of Cupid and Psyche, the traditional form and detail of the story was quite satisfying to him; in these the original sources are followed with great fidelity. But in telling the story of "The Writing on the Image," he makes the magician shut up in the death-trap from which he escapes in the mediæval story; and in "The Land East of the Sun" the story takes an entirely new course after the first waking, and goes wandering through new and strange realms. This last poem represents the culmination of the romantic-mediæval method in the strongest antithesis to the epic treatment of a given story. The mediæval mysticism in matters of religion is a familiar and accepted fact. Yet the modern divorce between religion

and life is so profound that this religious mysticism is oddly regarded as something apart and by itself, not as the application by men to religion of their ordinary way of thinking about anything which moved them at all deeply. "Mr. Morris," said a brilliant critic of this very story, "dreams of certain old mariners of Norway who dream of Gregory, who dreams of some one else, whom he also dreams to be himself: and this two-faced Janus of a dreamer dreams of another dreamer still, who lives on the edge of two worlds, and like the old monk who sat before the Cenacolo, can hardly discriminate between the shadow and the substance." This description is admirably exact; and the attitude of mind so described is the essence of that romantic mysticism from which Morris was recalled by the great imperious voice of the Icelandic epic, yet to which he kept perpetually reverting. It reappears in unqualified dominance in the prose romances of his latest years. In this larger view the influence on him of the epic, were it the Odyssey or the Æneid, the Laxdaela Saga or the Volsunga Saga, was in its nature a perturbing influence, that drew him for a time out of the obit into which finally he swung back.

Besides the abandoned "Aristomenes," several other stories were written for "The Earthly Paradise" which remain unpublished. Three at least of these are complete: two of them, "Orpheus and Eurydice" and "St. Dorothea," belonging to the plan of contents at first drawn out. The third, "The Wooing of Swanhild," though written on the whole in the earlier or romantic manner, may be inferred from its subject, which is one taken from the last chapters of the Volsunga Saga, to belong to the later period of distinct Icelandic influence. A number of others were destroyed by their author. Of "The Fortunes of Gyges" only two pages have

been preserved by some accident. The tales of "The King's Treasure House" (the famous Herodotean story of Rhampsinitus) and of "The Dolphins and the Lovers," a strangely romantic story given in bare outline by Plutarch in the work entitled "The Banquet of the Seven Sages," have wholly disappeared; nor can any trace be discovered of the poem founded on the beautiful thirteenth-century French romance of "Amis and Amile." It is a rather curious fact that Morris was dissatisfied with "The Death of Paris," and meant to rewrite it. Tennyson's "Oenone" was a poem for which he had a boundless admiration; and in "The Death of Paris" he seems to have had an uneasy feeling that the subject was one on which the last word had been already said.

Meanwhile his unresting activity was striking into fresh channels. The "Grettis Saga" of 1869 was followed by the "Volsunga Saga" of 1870. This translation also was executed in collaboration with Mr. Magnússon, and was published in May. In the previous month he had been sitting to Watts for the well-known portrait which represents him in the full prime of his life and vigour. But even before then he had found that "The Earthly Paradise" was practically off his hands, and had turned to the relaxation of changed employment. He thought of taking up painting again, and drew from the model for a while in Mr. C. F. Murray's studio. From painting he soon diverged to illumination. In February the beautiful illuminated book of his own poems, given by him to Mrs. Burne-Jones, had been begun. It was the first of a series of illuminated manuscripts on which he was much occupied for several years.

"I have been hard at work," he writes to Mrs. Morris on the 14th of March, "but have not done much ex-

cept the translations, as they are rather pressing now, and I want to get all my Volsung work done this week: then I shall set to work about Gabriel's review, which I must say rather terrifies me. Ned came to see me on Sunday; I read him my stanzas for the Volsunga and he thought them good. I did hope to be able to give you the news of my hair being cut this morning, but I had to stay in fair-copying for Strangeways."

The article on Rossetti's "Poems," here alluded to appeared in the Academy, a journal then just founded, on the 14th of May. Rossetti's strange fancy of a literary conspiracy against him, and his elaborate attempts to inspire favourable notices of the volume, are matter of common knowledge. Morris, with other friends, had been dragged into the business; and his article bears all the traces of a task, for once, executed against his will. It is stiff and laboured, and as nearly colourless as anything of his writing well could be.

His translation and illumination were not enough to fill his thoughts; and he wavered for a while between an instinct to break new ground in poetry and a reaction from the immense production of the last three years. The Arthurian legend once more attracted him, not now filling his mind, but making in it something of a counterpoise to the Northern Sagas. But on its mystical and religious side the cycle of the Sangreal was a subject from which, like Tennyson, though for different reasons, he instinctively shrank: and the long narrative poem on the story of Tristram, and the other on that of Balin and Balan, which were much in his mind this summer, never came to birth. In this year, too, the suggestion was made to him that he should translate the Odyssey; but neither had the time come for that.

Before the end of 1870, the last sheets of "The

Earthly Paradise" had left his hands. "I feel rather lost at having done my book," he writes on the 25th of November; "I find now I liked working at it better than I thought. I must try to get something serious to do as soon as may be." And again a few days later: "I confess I am dull now my book is done; one doesn't know sometimes how much service a thing has done us till it is gone: however one has time yet; and perhaps something else of importance will turn up soon."

The pity with which he clung to it, and the forlornness in which it left him when the two had to sever company, he has written down with absolute truth and sweetness in the words of the Epilogue. Shy and reserved in life, as to many matters that lay near his heart, he had all the instinct of the born man of letters for laying himself open in his books, and having no concealments from the widest circle of all. In the verses that frame the stories of "The Earthly Paradise" there is an autobiography so delicate and so outspoken that it must needs be left to speak for itself: and the final words which he puts in the mouth of his book, when he sends it forth to seek a place with Chaucer, are the plain truth about his own life so far as he understood it, as well as his deepest thought on the mystery of things.

For this he ever said, who sent me forth
To seek a place amid thy company;
That howsoever little was my worth,
Yet was he worth e'en just so much as I;
He said that rhyme hath little skill to lie;
Nor feigned to cast his worser part away
In idle singing for an empty day.

I have beheld him tremble oft enough
At things he could not choose but trust to me,
Although he knew the world was wise and rough:
And never did he fail to let me see

His love,—his folly and faithlessness, maybe;
And still in turn I gave him voice to pray
Such prayers as cling about an empty day.

Thou, keen-eyed, reading me, mayst read him through,
For surely little is there left behind;
No power great deeds unnameable to do;
No knowledge for which words he may not find,
No love of things as vague as autumn wind—
Earth of the earth lies hidden by my clay,
The idle singer of an empty day!

Children we twain are, saith he, late made wise,
In love, but in all else most childish still,
And seeking still the pleasure of our eyes,
And what our ears with sweetest sounds may fill;
Not fearing Love, lest these things he should kill;
Howe'er his pain by pleasure doth he lay,
Making a strange tale of an empty day.

Death have we hated, knowing not what it meant;
Life have we loved, through green leaf and through sere,
Though still the less we knew of its intent:
The Earth and Heaven through countless year on year,
Slow changing, were to us but curtains fair,
Hung round about a little room, where play
Weeping and laughter of man's empty day.

"I don't think," he writes within a few days of the date of these verses, "people really want to die because of mental pain, that is, if they are imaginative people; they want to live to see the play played out fairly." Such at all events was his own feeling. People who have not this imaginative instinct often wonder how a poet can bear to lay open his inmost feelings, and uncover the weaknesses of which man is made: still oftener the self-revelation passes clean over the heads of his audience, and so far are they from wondering that they do not even notice. It is the knowledge, no doubt, that all of his innermost heart, his love and hope and sorrow, which he pours into his verses is to the unsympathetic reader simply meaningless, which

allows a poet to write fearlessly what, being a poet, he must write in any case. *Sorge nie dass ich verrathe!* so true still are Heine's bitter words: *sorge nie! diese Welt glaubt nicht an Flammen, und sie nimmt's für Poesie.*

CHAPTER VII

MORRIS AND KELMSCOTT

At the age of thirty-six, in the full prime of vigour and in the rising light of fame which had not yet drawn after it its inevitable shadows of imitation and detraction, Morris occupied a position in some ways as enviable as could have been devised for him by his own imaginings. Watts's great portrait is the memorial which represents him at this stage of his life most fully if not most intimately. From it looks out the "powerful and beautiful face" which impressed itself unforgettably even on those who saw it but once. The massive head with its thickly clustering dark curls; the vague inexpressive eyes; the sensitive mouth, a little overweighted by the broad frank brows, are recorded in it with the felicity of genius. One sees in it the dreamer of dreams, as he described himself in a much quoted phrase, who is at the same time the man of action, overflowing with practical energy, and as eager as he had been in the days of his earliest enthusiasm, not only "to do and say and see so many things," but to carry out "things I have thought of for the bettering of the world as far as lies in me."

Of Morris as a poet and as an artist, the truest record is to be found in his actual work. In both cases alike he gave his best to the world quite simply

without ostentation, and without concealment; and with the world, as a still living influence, what was permanent in it remains. But of the personality behind it, that work, without the actual living speech and gesture and movement of the man, gives only partial glimpses: nor does it bear any trace at all of what made his personality most unique, that "rum and indescribable deportment" which was a perpetual fascination to all his acquaintance.

By some indefinable mixture of blood, the romantic element which was so powerful in his nature, and which made one side of his inner life one long dream, was united with that natural piety, that steady and almost stolid dutifulness, which has been the saving strength of his nation. Nor upon that side of his nature was he merely a typical Englishman; he was also a typical Londoner of the middle class, though the force of his genius transformed all the habits and thoughts and acts of his class into something quite individual. In this there was a striking resemblance between him and his great master. Among all his townsmen who have before our own day been eminent as men of letters or artists, it is to Chaucer that one would turn by the first instinct for a parallel. The resemblance even extended to physical features: the corpulent person, the demure smile, the "close silent eye." In his devotion to angling beyond all other pastimes, and his delight in all the simplest rural pleasures—the joy of the townsman taking a day in the country—he had something in common with Izaak Walton, the scholar and man of letters who sold chintzes and brocades in Fleet Street. With the most famous of all later Londoners there was in certain aspects even a closer analogy, which became more marked in the later years of Morris's life. None of his friends could fail to notice

how his potent and imperious personality recalled that of Samuel Johnson. The delight in contradiction and paradox under which there lay a fundamental integrity of intellect; the sanity and strong practical sense; the haunting fear of death, to a degree which would be called morbid in any less imaginative nature; even the slovenliness in dress and the inveterate habit of tea drinking, were as marked in the one as in the other.

The combination or the dreaminess which habitually lives in a world of its own creation with a hot and passionate temper is one which is perhaps not rare, but which seldom exists in so intense a form as it did in Morris. When "The Earthly Paradise" was being published "the men at the shop thought a great deal of it": but if they had been inclined to think meanly of him as a poet, they would in any case have respected and admired the employer whose language was so forcible and copious when things were not going to his mind. In one of his tempers he was capable of almost anything. Once at Red Lion Square he hurled a fifteenth-century folio, which in ordinary circumstances he would hardly have allowed any one but himself to touch, at the head of an offending workman. It missed the workman and drove a panel out of the workshop door. His "tempestuous and exacting company," in the phrase of one of his most intimate friends, had something of the quality of an overwhelming natural force; like the north wind, it braced and buffeted in almost equal measure. He had the incessant restlessness of a wild creature. One of his friends describes him, on the occasion of their first meeting in 1871, as pacing up and down the room like a caged lion. Even at work or at meals he could not sit still for long, but must

be continually shifting and fidgeting, getting up to cross the room or look out of the window and then sitting down again. This restless movement was a necessity to him as a means of working off his great bodily strength and superabundant vitality. In his gusts of temper he seemed insensible to pain and almost superhuman in his strength : he has been known to drive his head against a wall so as to make a deep dent in the plaster, and bite almost through the woodwork of a window frame. He could lift the heaviest weight in his teeth with apparent ease. Once when describing how he had seen passengers staggering off a Channel steamer loaded with luggage, he illustrated his point to the amusement and horror of his audience by getting a chair under each arm and then stooping and lifting the coal-scuttle in his teeth. His eyes, the most quick-sighted among all his acquaintance, had the filmed unobservant look of an eagle's. "When he was young," Sir Edward Burne-Jones says, "he was very handsome, and yet even then his eyes were the most inexpressive I ever saw. They say nothing to you, nor much look at you, but are so swift, they have taken in everything there is to be seen while you are wondering when they will open. If you saw him, he wouldn't look at you, but would know everything you had on, and all your expression, without being seen to look." The only expressive feature of the face was his firm, mobile, and delicately modelled mouth.

The familiar figure of more recent years had altered but little, except for the inevitable changes of age, from that of his prime. His dress always seemed full of his individuality. Certain youthful indiscretions in the way of purple trousers are remembered as having belonged to the time of the Oxford Brotherhood.

But his ordinary dress had no special quality except great simplicity and untidiness. In 1871 he accepted a place on the directorate of the mining company from which a large portion of the income of his mother and sisters as well as his own was derived. For the purpose of attending directors' meetings he kept a tall hat, which he hardly wore on any other occasion, and which caused him untold discomfort. His daugher May remembers, when a little child, finding this strange object in the house, and asking her mother first what it was, and then whether Papa wore it. Morris himself once said with perfect simplicity to a friend, "You see, one can't go about London in a top hat, it looks so devilish odd." And this was the mere truth in his case; for it was only in conventional dress that he looked really peculiar. When he resigned his directorship four years afterwards he came home from the last meeting he had attended and solemnly sat down upon his tall hat, which was never replaced. In his suit of blue serge and soft felt hat, he had something of the look of a working engineer and something of that of a sailor. He was walking down Kensington High Street one morning when a fireman from the brigade station stopped him and said, "Beg pardon, sir, but were you ever captain of the Sea Swallow?" Indeed a stranger might very well, not only from his clothing, but from his rocking walk and ruddy complexion, have taken him for a Baltic sea-captain. In those days he had not yet adopted the blue cotton shirts which, in later years, became his invariable dress and almost of the essence of his appearance. The capacity for producing and annexing dirt, noted by Rossetti, remained strong in him; and when he began to add dyeing to the other handicrafts which he practised, appearances were completely

given up. After he ceased to live at Queen Square in 1872, he very often went to lunch at the Faulkners' house a few doors off. He went along, if the day were fine, without a hat and in his French workman's blouse; and a new housemaid of the Faulkners' when she let him in thus dressed for the first time, went down to the kitchen in some perplexity, describing him to the cook as the butcher. Mr. Ellis, in the days of their first acquaintance, was privately warned by his confidential clerk "not to let that Mr. Morris run up a long account." How he looked to other people was a matter that never entered his head, and he never looked at himself. He had a curious dislike of mirrors. One of the most obvious peculiarities of his house at all times was the absence of mirrors or looking-glasses; there were none at all in any of the living rooms, and none in his bedroom.

With his great physical strength went the gift of profound and almost dreamless sleep, taken, to use his own phrase, in solid bars. From this he awoke at the full height of his energy. Within ten minutes of waking in the morning he had dressed and begun the business of the day. He was often at work at his writing, or his designing, or his loom, by the summer sunrise; and in those undisturbed hours lay a great part of the secret of the immense copiousness of his production both as a poet and as a decorative artist.

For one who made his whole work into a fascinating and absorbing recreation, and who could turn from one kind of work to another with such ease and swiftness, what is ordinarily called recreation was a thing of less importance than to most men. The only form of sport to which he was thoroughly devoted was angling. When he had a house of his own on the upper Thames, it was his delight at all times of

the year, and in all weathers, to escape from London for a day's fishing. He was often accompanied on these expeditions by Ellis, who was an equal enthusiast; and before that, they had fished over most of the river between Windsor and Richmond. But he never shot, and seldom rode when he could drive. His only other outdoor amusement was playing bowls. The bowling green had been one of the features of Red House, and he played the game a great deal when he had a garden of his own again at Hammersmith. His chief indoor games were backgammon, draughts, and cribbage; and at one time he played whist pretty regularly. The need of games to pass the time—the reason why nine persons out of ten after they are grown up play games at all—was a thing that he probably never felt. His mind was always working, and his hands never long idle. Nor, in spite of his exceptional swiftness in reading and the immense detailed knowledge which he acquired from books, was he what is called a great reader. His power of rapid reading did not degenerate into the mere physical craving to read. He always knew whether he wanted to read a book or not, and when he did not, nothing could induce him to read it. His library, until he began to collect early printed books, was not large, nor was it either selected or kept with any special care. He lost books which were not precious in themselves almost as fast as he read them; and his shelves were half filled with a strange collection of the yellow-backed novels which he had bought on railway journeys. His knowledge of mediæval English poetry and ballads was both large and accurate, but the Elizabethan and later authors he knew very imperfectly and read but little. Some of the great names of English poetry were his special aver-

sions. Milton he always abused, though he sometimes betrayed more knowledge of him that he would have been willing to admit; Wordsworth he disliked; he had little admiration for the later works of Browning, once so great a master to him, nor did he care much for anything of Tennyson's after "Maud." Keats he held the first of modern English poets.

Among the great prose authors under whose influence he had fallen at Oxford, Carlyle and Ruskin were the two who continued to hold him most strongly. For the latter, whose influence over him was indeed much the more profound and far-reaching, his admiration was sometimes crossed by that defiance which had been observed in his Oxford days to mingle with his enthusiasm for Tennyson. The earlier volumes of "Modern Painters" had been received by him with an admiration akin to worship; he was heard to describe the fifth volume, when it appeared in 1860, in a phrase characteristic of a swallower of formulas, as "mostly gammon." But this was the caprice of a momentary impatience; and all his serious references to Ruskin showed that he retained towards him the attitude of a scholar to a great teacher and master, not only in matters of art, but throughout the whole sphere of human life.

In a very different spirit he was devoted to George Borrow and read him perpetually; and no less devoted to the more obscured fame of William Cobbett, with whom he had many tastes and prejudices in common, and whose "Rural Rides" he knew almost by heart. Peacock was another of his favourite authors. But volumes which he read perhaps more than any of these, and which he imposed on his friends unflinchingly, were those describing the sayings and doings of the celebrated Mr. Jorrocks. With a feeling that was not

all love of paradox, though that had its share, he placed Surtees in the same rank with Dickens as a master of life. In a man who never hunted, who seldom even rode, and to whom the life of a country house in the hunting season was not merely alien but odious, this preference must remain something of an unexplained mystery. Of Dickens himself his knowledge and appreciation were both complete. It is not without value as an illustration of his curiously compounded personality that in the moods when he was not dreaming of himself as Tristram or Sigurd, he identified himself very closely with two creations of a quite different mould, Joe Gargery and Mr. Boffin. Both of those amiable characters he more or less consciously copied, if it be not truer to say more or less naturally resembled, and knew that he resembled. The "Morning, morning!" of the latter, and the "Wot larks!" of the former he adopted as his own favourite methods of salutation. And one of the phrases that were most constantly on his lips, which he used indiscriminately to indicate his disapproval of anything from Parliamentary institutions to the architecture of St. Paul's Cathedral, was, as all his friends will remember, the last recorded saying of Mr. F.'s Aunt, "Bring him forard, and I'll chuck him out o' winder."

The recollection of these middle years, by those who shared in them as children and are now themselves in the midway path of life, is one of strenuous work mingled with much talk and laughter, and broken by many little feasts and holidays. Nothing was more amazing in Morris than the way in which he always seemed at leisure, and always was ready for enjoyment. Neither in work nor in play was he wasteful; he had learned, in a way that few can, the great secret of not doing, whether it took the guise of work or of amuse-

ment, what he did not want to do. The so-called claims of society, so far as they did not represent anything for which he really cared, he quite simply and unaffectedly ignored. He never throughout his life belonged to a club. The drudgery of business he could not wholly escape, but he never allowed it either to absorb his time or to master his intelligence. That neglect of detail which is one of the secrets of success came to him naturally. For the intricacies of business he had no taste and little patience. "I keep fifteen clerks doing my accounts," he once observed, when inveighing against the artificial complexity of modern commerce, "and yet I cannot find out how much money I have got." If he had insisted on finding out, he might perhaps have known, but at the cost of this striking quality of detachment from routine. And for one so simple in his pleasures as he was, the routine of pleasure was as little worth its price to him as the routine of business. But with his chief friends the daily intercourse of pleasure was constant. For years a week day hardly ever passed, when he was in London, without his looking in on the Faulkners in Queen Square. At a later period the supper in the Strand on Thursday evenings, with Webb and one or two others, after the meetings of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, was equally constant. His Sunday mornings at Burne-Jones's house, which only ceased with his last illness, have already been mentioned. For many years he also dined there regularly on Wednesdays: "there was no music on those evenings," is a child's recollection, "and he would read aloud."

"Once when I had been upstairs in the nursery at Kensington Square," a friend writes of a visit to Burne-Jones's house in the winter of 1866-7, "I came down and found Morris in the parlour. He was nibbing a

pen, and he said after a few words of chat, 'Now you see, I'm going to write poetry, so you'll have to cut. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped.' So I cut; and I have a notion that I know what he wrote that evening, as next Saturday when I turned up as I always did, he read us a lot of the story of Psyche. I recollect his remarking that it was very hard work writing that sort of thing. I took it he was speaking of the thrashing Psyche gets at the hands of Venus. He really felt for her, and was evidently glad it was over."

But even when writing poetry he was by no means intolerant of interruption. Some years later Miss Mary De Morgan, when staying at Kelmscott Manor, came one day into the tapestry room, and found him alone there, busy writing at a side table. Seeing his occupation by the look of the manuscript, she was turning to leave the room again, when he called out to her, "Where are you going, Mary?" "I thought you were busy writing poetry," she said. "What the devil has that got to do with it?" he cheerfully replied. "Sit down and tell me a tale."

But while he found perpetual amusement in his work, his amusements had always a strong element of seriousness. "At my first visit," Mr. William De Morgan notes—this was at Red Lion Square in 1864 —"I chiefly recollect his dressing himself in vestments and playing on a regal, to illustrate points in connection with stained glass. As I went home it suddenly crossed my mind as a strange thing that he should, while doing what was so trivial and almost grotesque, continue to leave on my memory so strong an impression of his power—he certainly did, somehow." And this was true of all his diversions. Another friend of his who had been staying a few days with him was asked, after he came away, what they had talked

about. He confessed that he could not remember that they had talked of anything but eating: "and yet," he added, "I came away feeling myself enlarged and liberalized." For to Morris cookery had an important place among the arts of human life, and he knew a great deal about it in theory, and something also in practice. His wonderful memory served him here as in other things. Once he astonished a friend by giving off-hand the recipe for some rather unusual dish, and when she asked how he came to know it, told her that he had once had to stay a night at an inn where there was nothing to read but a cookery book, and had assimilated it in the course of the evening. His happiness in a day's fishing was much enhanced by cooking the fish he had caught. A few years later than this, talk had happened to turn on the problems of domestic service. "I wouldn't at all mind being a cook," Morris said, "for I understand cooking." "Now and again," he went on, "I would give you all a good feast, but feasts are spoiled if you have them every day, and I promise you I should keep up good strict discipline. I should say to you, 'Now this is tripe and onion day,' and on another day, 'Now this is porridge day,' and you should not have any choice." "I wouldn't be a parlour maid," he said in the course of the same discussion. "I wouldn't answer bells after a certain time, and if you rang the bells I should shy my boots at them." In the matter of food, as also of wine (in which he had a fine judgment), his taste was more French than modern English. "I always bless God," he once said, "for making anything so strong as an onion." One of his favourite illustrations of the decadence of England from its mediæval state was the barbarism of modern English cookery and in especial the abuse

or disuse of vegetables. "There are two things," he said in one of his perverse moods, "about which women know absolutely nothing, dress and cookery: their twist isn't that way. They have no sense of colour or grace in drapery, and they never invented a new dish or failed to half spoil an old one." A passage in the fifth book of Lucretius will occur to the classical reader as a parallel: and, indeed, all of that wonderful description of the origins of civilization, alike in its swift insight and in a certain childlike interest in details, is not unlike the talk which Morris would often pour out to his friends.

Above all, beyond even his delight in great buildings, in history, in the masterpieces of human invention, lay in him that intense passion for Nature, "my love of the earth and worship of it," which, soon after the completion of "The Earthly Paradise," obtained a centre in the Manor House at Kelmscott. For the twenty-five years during which this beautiful old house was his country home, he found in it a peace and joy that no other place gave him, and his attachment to it became more and more deep—one may boldly say, more and more passionate: for with him the love of things had all the romance and passion that is generally associated with the love of persons only. "It has come to be to me," he wrote in 1882, "the type of the pleasant places of the earth, and of the homes of harmless simple people not overburdened with the intricacies of life; and as others love the race of man through their lovers or their children, so I love the earth through that small space of it."

Kelmscott was found out by accident. Five years in Bloomsbury had not reconciled Morris or his family to the prospect of unmitigated London, and they had been looking out vaguely for some little country place

which they might make more or less permanently their own, and which would release them from that incubus of middle class London life, the recurring choice of a place for summer quarters, and the discomforts of a holiday in lodgings. An advertisement of Kelmscott Manor House in a London house-agent's list in the early spring of 1871 seemed to offer a place that would just suit them, and when he went down to see it, the reality exceeded his best expectations.

On the 17th of May he writes to Faulkner: "I have been looking about for a house for the wife and kids, and whither do you guess my eye is turned now? Kelmscott, a little village about two miles above Radcott Bridge—a heaven on earth; an old stone Elizabethan house like Water Eaton, and such a garden! close down on the river, a boat house and all things handy. I am going there again on Saturday with Rossetti and my wife: Rossetti because he thinks of sharing it with us if the thing looks likely."

The house stands on the upper Thames, thirty miles by water from Oxford. It is approached by lanes from the little town of Lechlade, three miles off, to which there is now a railway. At that time, however, that line did not go beyond Witney, and Kelmscott had to be reached from Faringdon, by a long drive through the Berkshire hills. Both may be called back ways of approaching it; the grand entry, up the lovely lonely waterway, was described by Morris himself thus, nearly twenty years later:

"On we went, turning a sharp angle and going north a little. Presently we saw before us a bank of elm-trees, which told us of a house amidst them. In a few minutes we had passed through a deep eddying pool into the sharp stream that ran from the ford, and

beached our craft on a tiny strand of limestone gravel, and stepped ashore.

"Mounting on the cart-road that ran along the river some feet above the water, I looked round about me. The river came down through a wide meadow on my left, which was grey now with the ripened seeding grasses; the gleaming water was lost presently by a turn of the bank, but over the meadow I could see the gables of a building where I knew the lock must be. A low wooded ridge bounded the river-plain to the south and south-east whence we had come, and a few low houses lay about its feet and up its slope. I turned a little to my right and through the hawthorn sprays and long shoots of the wild roses could see the flat country spreading out far away under the sun of the calm evening, till something that might be called hills with a look of sheep-pastures about them bounded it with a soft blue line. Before one, the elm boughs still hid most of what houses there might be in this river-side dwelling of men; but to the right of the cart-road a few grey buildings of the simplest kind showed here and there.

"My feet moved on along the road they knew. The raised way led us into a little field bounded by a backwater of the river on one side; on the right hand we could see a cluster of small houses and barns, and before us a grey stone barn and a wall partly overgrown with ivy, over which a few grey gables showed. The village road ended in the shallow of the backwater. We crossed the road, and my hand raised the latch of a door in the wall, and we stood presently on a stone path which led up to the old house. The garden between the wall and the house was redolent of the June flowers, and the roses were rolling over one another with that delicious superabundance of small well-

tended gardens which at first sight takes away all thought save that of beauty. The blackbirds were singing their loudest, the doves were cooing on the roof-ridge, the rooks in the high elm-trees beyond were garrulous among the young leaves, and the swifts wheeled whining about the gables. And the house itself was a fit guardian for all the beauty of this heart of summer.

"O me! O me! How I love the earth, and the seasons, and weather and all things that deal with it, and all that grows out of it—as this has done! The earth and the growth of it and the life of it! If I could but say or show how I love it!"

Such, in the romance of a new Arcadia into which the social revolution might at last lead mankind, is the account Morris gives of his return to the loved place which he could not wish or fancy but unchanged upon a changed and happier earth. The pictures of the house and its surroundings which follow are taken from a more unimpassioned description, which is nevertheless no less lovingly and characteristically worded, in an account of Kelmscott which he wrote in the last year of his life for a magazine conducted by members of the Birmingham Guild of Handicraft.

"The village of Kelmscott lies close to the Thames on the Oxfordshire side of it, some five miles (by water) from the present end of the navigation at Inglesham. To the north-east of the village lies the nearly treeless piece of ground formerly Grafton Common, and beyond it is a string of pretty inland villages. On the Berkshire side a range of heights, low but well designed, rise up from the flat meadows.

"The church, at the north-west end of the village, is small but interesting; the mass of it, a nave with a tiny aisle, transept and chancel, being early English

of date, though the arches of the aisle are round-headed. There are remains of painting all over the church, the north transept having been painted with figure subjects of the life of Christ in trefoil head panels. The east window has a painted glass image of St. George (in whose honour the church is dedicated) of the time of Edward IV. Most of the windows (which are insertions of the early 14th century) have their inner arches elegantly cusped, a characteristic feature of these Oxfordshire churches. A very beautiful bell-cot formed by two trefoil arches crowns the eastern gable of the nave, and composes pleasantly with the low-pitched roofs over a clerestory, which in the 15th century took the place of the once high-pitched ones. The church is plastered almost all over the walls, as no doubt it was in the earliest days: it is fortunate in having escaped the process of stripping and pointing which so many of our village churches have undergone at the hands of the restoring wiseacres.

"When you turn down from the church towards the Thames you come at a corner of the road on the base of the village cross (probably of the 15th century), and then, turning to the left and bearing round to the right, all of which transaction takes place in about two hundred yards, you come face to face with a mass of grey walls and pearly grey roofs which makes the house, called by courtesy the Manor House, though it seems to have no manorial rights attached to it, which I have held for twenty-three years. It lies at the very end of the village on a road which, brought up shortly by a backwater of the Thames, becomes a mere cart-track leading into the meadows along the river.

"Through a door in the high unpointed stone wall you go up a flagged path through the front garden to

the porch. The house from this side is a lowish three storied one with mullioned windows, and at right angles to this another block whose bigger lower windows and pedimented gable-lights indicate a later date. The house is built of well-laid rubble stone of the district, the wall of the latter part being buttered over, so to say, with thin plaster which has now weathered to the same colour as the stone of the walls; the roofs are covered with the beautiful stone slates of the district, the most lovely covering which a roof can have, especially when, as here and in all the traditional old houses of the country-side, they are 'sized down'; the smaller ones to the top and the bigger towards the eaves, which gives one the same sort of pleasure in their orderly beauty as a fish's scales or a bird's feathers.

"The farm buildings stand to the south of the house: a very handsome barn of quite beautiful proportions, and several other sheds, including a good dove-cot, all built in the same way as the house, and grouping delightfully with it.

"The garden, divided by old clipped yew hedges, is quite unaffected and very pleasant, and looks in fact as if it were, if not a part of the house, yet at least the clothes of it: which I think ought to be the aim of the layer out of a garden.

"Going under an arched opening in the yew hedge which makes a little garth about a low door in the middle of the north wall, one comes into a curious passage or lobby, a part of which is screened into a kind of pantry by wooden mullions which have once been glazed. The said lobby leads into what was once the great parlour (the house is not great at all remember) and is now panelled with pleasing George I. panelling painted white: the chimney-piece is no

doubt of the date of the building, and is of rude but rather amusing country work; the windows in this room are large and transomed, and it is as pleasant as possible; and I have many a memory of hot summer mornings passed in its coolness amidst the green reflections of the garden.

"The tapestry room is over the big panelled parlour. The walls of it are hung with tapestry of about 1600, representing the story of Samson; they were never great works of art, and now when all the bright colours are faded out, and nothing is left but the indigo blues, the greys and the warm yellowy browns, they look better, I think, than they were meant to look: at any rate they make the walls a very pleasant background for the living people who haunt the room; and, in spite of the designer, they give an air of romance to the room which nothing else would quite do.

"Another charm this room has, that through its south window you not only catch a glimpse of the Thames clover meadows and the pretty little elm-crowned hill over in Berkshire, but if you sit in the proper place, you can see not only the barn aforesaid with its beautiful sharp gable, the grey stone sheds, and the dove-cot, but also the flank of the earlier house and its little gables and grey scaled roofs, and this is a beautiful outlook indeed.

"A house that I love; with a reasonable love I think: for though my words may give you no idea of any special charm about it, yet I assure you that the charm is there; so much has the old house grown up out of the soil and the lives of those that lived on it: some thin thread of tradition, a half-anxious sense of the delight of meadow and acre and wood and river; a certain amount (not too much let us hope) of common

sense, a liking for making materials serve one's turn, and perhaps at bottom some little grain of sentiment: —this I think was what went to the making of the old house."

To this account of Kelmscott may be added a few observations made by Mr. Webb from his further knowledge as a professional architect:

"From my earliest recollections this general kind of house was familiar to me, where the coarse oolite stone of Thames valley gave the peculiar character to the old buildings in and around Oxford. There are still remaining, in more or less perfect state, many houses of the same quality, though some are more architecturally marked than at Kelmscott.

"It is a known fact that in outlying places, where stone mason's work is the chief part of the building, and there are many quarries giving the same formation of stone, the prevailing traditions of building lasted longer in one place than another. This makes it often difficult in such places to be sure of dates from the style of the masonry, and more particularly in the last centuries, as the masons worked so much in the older way, when in busier places, or districts, changes of fashion told more quickly.

"W. M. often spoke of what was recorded here and there, and of what he had gathered from the natives, as to dates of the Kelmscott house building: I came to no conclusion—save, that the work was really later than it looked to be.

"For so late a time of genuine native building, and from the modesty of the house altogether, it was singular how the regular *plan* of the old English form, of all degrees of importance, was inclosed in the earlier part of it. There was the entrance doorway in the front wall leading through to the opposite doorway in

the back wall, with the hall on the right hand, cut off from the passage by the screen, with the kitchen and other offices on the left: the parlour (or 'solar') at the other end of the hall, by the side of the stairs, with cellar under; all of which was of the smallest and least pretentious work. Then, a comparatively few years later, the large square parlour was built with the tapestry room over, in loftier range, and in a style clearly showing the Renaissance influence, chiefly marked by the two large fire-places, and the small classically shaped windows in the gables of attics in the roofs.

"No unprejudiced person could read the last chapter of 'News from Nowhere' without being obliged to allow that W. M. had read the influences of the beautiful place in its entirety clearly, and without transformation by imagination; the real wanting no fanciful improvement. The price he paid for this joy in the house and all lying about it was the shadow of the coming change which overhung it: no efforts on his part—and they were many—could stay the piecemeal fungus-growth of disease in building which had begun to eat into the fringe of the surroundings: for each inevitable new element of change had tenfold brutal force in its vulgarization from the collected purity and simplicity on which it was settling down."

The country in which Kelmscott lies is among the sleepiest and loneliest of southern England. With little bold or striking beauty, it has a charm of unequalled subtlety and lastingness. The young Thames winds through level pastures, among low surrounding hills, in a landscape that seems as if little change had passed over it since the English settlement. Beyond the level and often flooded river-meadows the ground rises imperceptibly northwards towards the spurs of

the Cotswolds, out of which half-a-dozen small rivers break to mingle with the Thames. Bibury, one of these little-known Cotswold villages, "lying down in the winding valley beside the clear Colne," was described by Morris as "surely the most beautiful village in England." Churches, houses, barns, the dry walls of the fields, are all alike built of the golden-grey limestone underlying the soil. Hardly a village is without a beautiful church, generally dating back to the thirteenth century. Broadwell, the parish next but one to Kelmscott, has a tower and spire built by the same masons as those who built the tower and spire of Oxford Cathedral, and on their smaller scale equal in beauty. At Langford, a mile off, part of the church dates from before the Norman Conquest. The parish church of Burford on the Windrush, a sumptuously decorated building of less ancient date, is an epitome of the whole civic life and art of the later Middle Ages. Much of the domestic building of this region is little inferior to the churches either in age or architectural beauty. The most splendid example is the tithe barn at Great Coxwell, a noble structure of the middle of the thirteenth century, "unapproachable in its dignity, as beautiful as a cathedral, yet with no ostentation of the builder's art," its hundred and fifty feet of grey roof raised on a forest of orderly set oak timbers. It was always upheld by Morris as one of the finest buildings in England or in the world. The grey pointed arches over the Thames, on the solitary highway leading south out of the Royal Forest of Wychwood, are as beautiful now as when, six hundred and fifty years ago, they received their still surviving name of the New Bridge. A little further off, under the feet of the Cotswolds, is Chastleton, the finest and most complete of all surviving Jacobean

houses. In a land remote from commerce, full of beautiful building, and with perfect building material everywhere close at hand, it is not strange that the tradition of beauty should have survived longer than elsewhere.

This upper Thames valley, well-wooded and abundantly watered, is a land of birds: The blackbirds sing at Kelmscott after they have fallen silent elsewhere. The little island formed by the backwater close to the house was always filled with song from a hundred throats. In Morris's letters from Kelmscott there are constant allusions to the bird-life about it. The two following passages belong to the season of late summer:

"The birds were very delightful about us; I have been of late so steeped in London that it was a quite fresh pleasure to see the rooks about, who have been very busy in this showery weather. There was no lack of herons in these upper waters, and in the twilight the stint or summer snipe was crying about us and flitting from under the bank and across the stream: such a clean-made, neat-feathered, light grey little chap he is, with a wild musical little note like all the moor-haunting birds."

"We have had all the birds here again. The herons have been stalking about the field in the gravest manner; and I have seen the kingfishers very busy. One ducked down into the water before me and came out again with a little fish. I saw an owl last night come sailing along, and suddenly turn head over heels and down in the grass; after a mouse I suppose: such a queer action I never saw."

Another letter in a few brief vivid touches gives a picture of the birds in October:

"The western sky is getting leaden grey and the

wind is rain-cold. I heard a heron 'squark' just now, and saw two of them sailing overhead. I have seen the kingfishers twice: one sat three yards from me for two or three minutes and talked to himself before he saw me: he was a beauty."

And again soon after Christmas:

"Bossom told me that the hard winter had killed a huge number of the moor-hens. He said that when the frost was on they would come down to the open water by his barge and drink a drop or two and then die, poor things."

The creek, with its wooden bridge and boat-house, has now been cut off from the house by an earthwork and deep ditch formed to keep out the winter floods from the village, and the weir and gate-house across the meadow have been rebuilt; otherwise there is scarcely a change from thirty years ago in the manor-house and its immediate surroundings.

"The house was then kept," Mr. Ellis says, "by an old couple, Philip Comely and his wife, who were the ideal English villagers, capable, careful, frugal, and industrious. But Morris was much embarrassed by the apparently mechanical arrangement, 'as though it were a trick of machinery,' by which Philip's hand rose to the brim of his hat, or lacking that to his forelock, with every word he uttered. Philip's cottage served as a sort of lodge to the manor-house, rented for a shilling a week, with a good-sized and fruitful garden."

Kelmscott was at first taken by Morris in joint-tenancy with Rossetti. The breakdown in Rossetti's health, which had begun two or three years earlier, was now very marked, and it was hoped that quiet life in a remote country house might do much to restore him to bodily health and relieve his morbid imaginations.

For a while he was much more there than Morris, who could not easily be away from London and his work for a long time together. He was there through the summer and autumn of 1871. In 1872 the dangerous illness of which details are given in his biography was followed by a long visit to Scotland, but he was at Kelmscott again from September all through the winter of 1872-3, and for the greater part of the following twelve months. In the summer of 1874 he finally left it; not a little to Morris's relief for many reasons. The manor-house soon resumed its quietness and simplicity. The expense of keeping up a country house in permanence was as yet rather a severe strain on Morris's unaided means; and the joint-tenancy was for some years resumed with Mr. Ellis as the partner. From this time forth it was the haven of rest to which he always returned with a fresh and deep delight. All seasons there were alike sweet to him. The following extracts are taken almost at random from familiar letters of different years.

February. "The waters are out a little, owing to the melting snow. It is a cold rather windy day, but not unpleasant; brilliantly sunny at first, now cloudy with gleams of sun at times. It froze last night; but took to a sharp shower in the morning. As to the garden, they are late here; there are two or three crocuses out, but most of them are not above ground even; the winter aconite is not fully in blossom, and the yellow jasmine is over. Snowdrops are everywhere, but mostly double, however they give one a delightful idea of spring about: there are a few violets out and here and there a coloured primrose; and some of the hepatica roots have flowered, but show no leaves. But how pretty it looks to see the promise

of things pushing up through the clean un-sooty soil. I think we shall have a beautiful garden this year."

April. "I never yet till now understood how green the grass could be in spring; it is so green that it brings all the distance near and flattens the landscape into a mediæval picture. It is most beautiful; and when we were here in the middle of March the grass was all as grey as grey. You see just now there are not many daisies out, and the bents have not begun to grow, so that the grass is all grass and deep green. It has just been raining May butter, as Izaak Walton says: looked for an hour as if it would never stop raining again; then it got a little lighter, and then of a sudden was the bright sun and a rainbow. Item, I have eaten asparagus and heard the cuckoo: the blackbirds wake me about 4 o'clock a.m.: as for the rooks they never stop all day long. I saw a leash of plovers yesterday squawking away, and making believe that they had no nest close at hand. The garden is full of bullfinches, which are fat pretty dears, and sing a little short song very sweetly."

May. "The fields are all butter-cuppy. The elms are mostly green up to their tops: the hawthorn not out, but the crabs beautiful, and also that white-beam (I think they call it) with the umbelliferous flowers. In the garden we have lots of tulips out looking beautiful; the white bluebells and some blue ones: some of the anemones are in blossom and they all soon will be: they are very lovely. Apple-blossom for the most part only in bud, but that cherry-tree near the arbour opposite my window is a mass of bloom. The heartseases are beautiful; a few of the Iceland poppies are out: the raspberries are showing for blossom."

August. "The fishing is pretty much as it was; the river higher and the weeds uncut, though not very visible at the first glance because the water is high. Altogether a very pleasant river to travel on, the bank being still very beautiful with flowers; the long purples, and willow-herb, and that strong-coloured yellow flower very close and buttony, are the great show: but there is a very pretty dark blue flower, I think mug-wort, mixed with all that, besides the purple blossom of the house-mint and mouse-ear and here and there a bit of meadow-sweet belated. As to the garden it seems to me its chief fruit is—blackbirds. However they have left us some gooseberries, and I shall set to work this morning to get some before their next sit-down meal. As for flowers, the July glory has departed as needs must, but the garden looks pleasant though not very flowery. Those sweet sultans are run very much to leaf, but the beds in which they and the scabious are look very pretty, the latter having very delicate foliage. There are two tall hollyhocks (O so tall) by the strawberries, one white, one a very pretty red: there are still a good many poppies in blossom. Few apples, few plums, plenty of vegetables else. Weather doubtful; I woke up this morning to a most splendid but very stormy sunrise. The nights have been fine, and the moon rises her old way from behind the great barn."

October. "The garden is nearly over now till spring comes again, except that there are a good many roses, and amongst them, a pale sweet-briar blossom among the scarlet hips, that I am sure I never saw before. The weather has been wild, stormy and rough, with the bar of flood-water lying between us and our little outings. It is bright enough just now, though the wind is still talking threateningly. Tues-

day and Wednesday nights cost us four more of the elms on the island, which is now sadly thin."

Such was the rich and perpetually varying background on which life unrolled itself here. His love for the place grew with the years, and his joy in it was only troubled by a sense of stolen sweetness which sometimes came over him when he thought of work and duty in London. "I rather want to be in London again," he writes once on a golden day of early September, "for I feel as if my time were passing with too little done in the country: altogether I fear I am a London bird; its soot has been rubbed into me, and even these autumn mornings can't wash me clean of restlessness."

But in the summer of 1871 the visit to Iceland, which he had planned since "The Earthly Paradise" was off his hands, was occupying all his thoughts, and he saw little of Kelmscott till afterwards. At Whitsuntide Webb went down with him to look over it, and Faulkner joined them from Oxford. The house was reported to be in sound condition, and was taken from midsummer. At the beginning of July Morris took his wife and children down, returning himself at once to make the last preparations for his northern voyage.

CHAPTER VIII

JOURNEY TO ICELAND

1871

THE journey through Iceland in the summer of 1871 had, both before and after its occurrence, an importance in Morris's life which can hardly be over-estimated, and which, even to those who knew him well, was not wholly intelligible. To enter into his feelings one must imagine a strange combination of Johnson in the Hebrides and Byron in Greece. The heroic stories of Iceland stood in his mind at the head of the world's literature; the deeds which they chronicled were the summit in their tragic force of all human achievement. And the Icelandic Republic represented, more nearly than any other state of things recorded in history, the political and social framework of life which satisfied his mind and imagination. On the Law-Mound of Thingvalla, by the steads of Herdholt or Lithend, he stood with deeper-kindled emotions than would have been roused in him in the Roman Forum or on the Athenian Acropolis, or where grass grows over the fallen towers of Troy. With such depth of awe and prostration of spirit a pilgrim might approach the desolate and holy places of a land where gods had once walked in the likeness of men. In his poem of "Ice-

land First Seen" he gave this feeling its fullest utterance. "What went ye into the wilderness for to see?"—this phrase kept perpetually reverting to him as he thought of Iceland: a land waste, black, desolate, grey-grassed, "dreadful with grinding of ice and record of scarce-hidden fire," and yet made by undying tales a treasure-house and queen of lands.

And to this was added the excitement of new and strange adventure. The voyage to Iceland had not become so common an amusement of a summer holiday as it is now: though one reached the island by a mail steamer and could map out the route accurately beforehand, there was enough of strangeness about the whole proceedings to make the planning of the journey quite exciting. The journey itself was one that had to be taken in adventurous explorers' fashion, with guides and a string of packhorses, carrying tents and food and all the means of life: once inland, the traveller was beyond all reach of news: it was a prolonged picnic spiced by hard living and rough riding. "Don't forget to practise riding," he wrote to Faulkner in May. "I began this morning. By Gum the great we shall have plenty of it there according to our program."

The party were four in number. Mr. Magnússon, who was taking this opportunity of paying a visit to his native place and kinsfolk, was the organizer and guide-in-chief. Faulkner was the third of the party; and the fourth was Mr. W. H. Evans of Forde Abbey in Dorset, a recent acquaintance, who had been planning an Iceland voyage on his own account and was ready to fall in with the wishes of the others as regards all the details of travelling. Morris entered into the preparations for the journey with the delight of a schoolboy. Money had to be sent out to Reykjavik to buy

riding and pack horses for the party; tents, blankets, food, and appliances of all kinds were to be bought, and details of travel in the desert were rehearsed in anticipation. The Burne-Jones children long remembered vividly how Morris came one day and built a little hearth in their garden with loose bricks, over which he cooked a stew in the manner of some pirate or backwoodsman in a story-book. As the time drew near he was as excited and fidgety as a boy preparing for the holidays. The importance of the occasion was such that he resolved, for the first time in his life, to keep a diary. This was almost necessary in any case if he wished to bring home any ordered account of his adventures, for from the day the travellers struck inland from Reykjavik until they regained it again there was little chance of sending, any more than of receiving, letters. This diary, scribbled from day to day on the spot, was carefully written out by him when he came home, and afterwards revised and written out again with some idea of publishing it. This idea, however, considered and deferred more than once, was finally rejected by him towards the end of his life. The extracts given here are from the revised manuscript given by him to Mrs. Burne-Jones in 1873.

On the 6th of July, the party (except Mr. Evans, who had gone on to Leith by sea) started from London to take the fortnightly Danish mail boat from Granton. "That morning," says the diarist, "my heart had failed me, and I felt as if I should have been glad of any accident that had kept me at home; yet now it would have seemed unbearable to sleep in London another night." All night in the train he was too excited to sleep; but with the next day's dawn he recovered himself and began to observe things: sunrise among the forges of Darlington, a beautiful sky-landscape strangely

confused with the still-glowing furnace fires: the clean Northumberland country, and the poetical-looking bay in which Holy Island lies, with the little town running all up the hill near the end of its long northern horn: Berwick-on-Tweed with its land-locked harbour and the long bridge of many pointed arches: the lovely glens that break down seaward from the skirts of the Lammermuirs, "like one's imagination of what the backgrounds of the Border Ballads ought to be": and finally the imposing masses and doleful detail of Edinburgh. It was his first sight of Scotland, a country which, like Dr. Johnson, he never loved and was always ready to find fault with. The next day the "Diana," one of the two steamers which alternated for the Iceland mail service, came in to Granton harbour, and they sailed the following morning. She was a wooden screw steamer which once had been a Danish gunboat, of about 240 tons, roomy for her size, but with an extraordinary capacity for rolling. The diary sets down a description of her somewhat as though she were a mediæval building:

"The little vessel looked quite clean and tidy now: she is as aforesaid an old gunboat, long and low, rising somewhat forward, and with bulkheads across the deck just forward of the deck-cabin, that seemed to us to forebode plenty of water on board: she has three masts, the forward one has two square sails and a fore and aft sail, the middle one a fore and aft sail, and the after one no sail at all bent on it: round about the rudder is a little raised platform where we lay about a good deal on the voyage out, then comes the deck-cabin with a narrow covered passage leading forward on each side of it, and with a hurricane deck on the top: then there is a small open space broken by the sky-lights of the engine room between the deck-cabin

and the galley; there is good space for a walk forward of this, but when there is the least sea on, unless the wind is right astern it is too wet to be pleasant: over the galley, I forgot to say, is the bridge where the captain or mate stands to steer the ship: also our sleeping cabin is reached by stairs from the deck-cabin, and there is a ladies' cabin on the other side of ours—ours is a very small place, and almost pitch dark when the lamps are not lighted; as small as it is we were surprised to find that it really was not very stuffy, for they have managed to ventilate it well."

They had left Granton soon after sunrise on Sunday morning; and on Tuesday at daybreak the Faroes were sighted.

"I have often noticed," says the diary, "in one's expeditions, how hard it is to explain to one's friends afterwards why such and such a day was particularly delightful, or give them any impression of one's pleasure, and such a trouble besets me now about the past day.

"I woke up later than usual, about half-past six, and went on deck in a hurry, because I remembered the mate had promised that we should be at Thorshaven in the Faroes by then, and that we should have sighted the south islands of them long before: and now there we were sure enough, steaming up the smooth water of a narrow firth with the shore close on either board: I confess I shuddered at my first sight of a really northern land in the grey of a coldish morning. (The Faroes seemed to me such a gentle sweet place when we saw them again after Iceland.) The hills were not high, especially on one side, as they slope beachless into the clear but grey water; the grass was grey between greyer ledges of stone that divided the hills in regular steps; it was not savage,

but mournfully empty and barren, the grey clouds, dragging over the hill-tops or lying in the hollows, being the only thing that varied the grass, stone, and sea: yet as we went on, the firth opened out on one side and showed wild strange hills and narrow sounds between the islands, that had something, I don't know what, of poetic and attractive about them; and on one side was sign of population in the patches of bright green that showed the home-fields of farms on the hillsides, and at last at the bight's end we saw the pleasant-looking little town of Thorshaven, with its green-roofed little houses clustering round a little bay and up a green hillside: thereby we presently cast anchor, the only other craft in the harbour being three fishing smacks, cutters, who in answer to the hoisting of our flag ran up English colours, and were, we afterwards found out, from Grimsby for Iceland. The shore soon became excited at our arrival, and boats put off to us, the friends of our three passengers for the Faroes, and others, and there was a great deal of kissing on deck presently: then came a smart-looking boat carrying the governor, and having eight oars aside, manned by the queerest old carles, who by way of salute as the boat touched our side, shuffled off their Faroish caps in a very undignified manner. These old fellows, like most (or all) of the men, wore an odd sort of Phrygian cap, stockings and knee-breeches, loose at the knee, and a coat like a knight's *just-au-corps*, only buttoning in front, and generally open. The boats are built high stem and stern, with the keel-rib running up into an ornament at each end, and cannot have changed in the least since the times of the Sagas."

After breakfast the passengers went on shore for the day. "Magnússon took us to the store of a friend

of his, a sort of place like a ship's hold, and where they sold everything a Faroese would buy from a tin-tack to a cask of brandy; we found nothing to buy there but Danish cherry-brandy, which was good and cheap; then we went into the private house of the merchant, and were kindly welcomed by his wife into a pretty wooden house very like a ship's cabin, and, to me, still unquiet: it was very clean, painted white, and with roses and ivy planted in great pots growing all over the drawing-room wall (inside). Thence we went out into the town, which pleased me very much: certainly there was a smell of fish, and these creatures, or parts of them, from guts to gutted bodies, hung and lay about in many places; but there was no other dirt apparent; the houses were all of wood, high-roofed with little white casements, the rest of the walls being mostly done over with Stockholm tar; every roof was of turf, and fine crops of flowery grass grew on some of them. The houses were pitched down with little order enough, and in fact the whole town was like a toy Dutch town of my childhood's days. The people we met were very polite, good-tempered, and contented-looking: the women not pretty, but not horrible either, and the men often quite handsome, and always carrying themselves well in their neat dresses; which include, by the bye, skin shoes tied about the ankle with neat thongs: the men were often quite swarthy, and had a curious cast of melancholy on their faces, natural I should think to the dwellers in small remote islands."

After seeing the town they set off to walk across the island of Straumey. "Presently, having gone through the town, we met on a road that ran through little fields of very sweet flowery grass nearly ready for the scythe: it affected me strangely to see all the

familiar flowers growing in a place so different to anything one had ever imagined, and withal (it had grown a very bright fresh day by now) there was real beauty about the place of a kind I can't describe. We were soon off these cultivated meadows, however, and in a long deep valley of the open fells, peaty and grass-clad, with a small stream running through it, and not unlike to many Cumberland valleys I have been in: up the hillside on the left we struck, and clomb the hill, whence turning round, we could see the sound we had come up this morning, the little 'Diana' lying in the harbour with boats clustered round her, the little toylike-looking town so small, so small, and beyond it the mountains, jagged and peaked, of another island, with the added interest of knowing that there was a deep sound between us and them: sea and sky were deep blue now, but the white clouds yet clung to the mountains here and there.

"We turned away and went along the ridge of the mountain-neck, and looking all up the valley, could see it turning off towards the right, and a higher range above its bounding hill; and again it was exciting to be told that this higher range was in another island; we saw it soon, as we turned a corner of the stony stepped grey hills, and below us lay a deep calm sound, say two miles broad, a hog-backed steep mountain-island forming the other side of it, next to which lay a steeper islet, a mere rock; and then other islands, the end of which we could not see, entangled the sound and swallowed it up; I was most deeply impressed with it all, yet can scarcely tell you why; it was like nothing I had ever seen, but strangely like my old imaginations of places for sea-wanderers to come to: the day was quite a hot summer day now, and there was no cloud in the sky, and the atmosphere was very,

very clear, but a little pillowy cloud kept dragging and always changing yet always there, over the top of the little rocky islet. All the islands, whether sloping or sheer rocks, went right into the sea without a hand's breadth of beach anywhere; and, little thing as that seems, I suppose it is this which gives the air of romanticism to these strange islands. Close by the sea lay the many gables (black wood with green turf-roofs) of the farm of Kirkjubae (Kirkby), a little white-washed church being the nearest to the sea, while close under the basalt cliff was the ruin of a stone mediæval church: a most beautiful and poetical place it looked to me, but more remote and melancholy than I can say, in spite of the flowers and grass and bright sun: it looked as if you might live for a hundred years before you would ever see ship sailing into the bay there; as if the old life of the saga-time had gone, and the modern life never reached the place.

"We hastened down, along the high mowing-grass of the home-field, full of buttercups and marsh-marigolds, and so among the buildings: the long-nosed cadaverous parson who guided us took us first to the ruin, which he said had never been finished, as the Reformation had stopped the building of it: in spite of which story, it is visibly not later than 1340 in date, which fact I, with some qualms, stoutly asserted, to the parson's disgust, though 'tis quite a new fault to me to find local antiquaries post-date their antiquities: anyhow it was, or had been, a rich and beautiful Decorated chapel without aisles, and for all I know had never been finished: thence we went into the more modern church (such a flower-bed as its roof was!) which was nevertheless interesting from its having a complete set of bench-ends richly carved (in

deal) of the fifteenth century, but quite northern in character, the interlacing work mingling with regular fifteenth-century heraldic work and very well carved figures that yet retained, in costume and style, a strong tinge of the thirteenth century: the ornament of the bishop's throne, a chair with a trefoiled canopy, though I am pretty sure of the same date as the bench-ends, was entirely of the northern interlacing work.

"From the church we went into the bonder's house, which was very clean, and all of unpainted deal, walls, floor and ceiling, with queer painted old presses and chests about it: he turned up with his two children presently, and welcomed us in that queer northern manner I got used to after a little, as if he was thinking of anything else than us, nay, rather as if he were not quite sure if we were there or not."

The "Diana" weighed anchor after dinner. "The evening was very fine still, the sea quite smooth and the tide in our favour; so the captain told us we were going to thread the islands by the sound called the Westmanna-firth, instead of going round about them; so, as it turned out, we had the best of our sight of the Faroes yet to see. Going down the sound we had come up in the morning, we turned round into the sound we had looked down into from Kirby that noon, passing close by the stead itself, and so into the Westmanna-firth, that grew narrower and narrower as we went on, though here and there between breaks of the islands we could see the open ocean: at last we were in the narrowest of it; it was quite smooth, clear and green, and not a furlong across; the coasts were most wonderful on either side; pierced rocks running out from the cliffs under which a brig might have sailed: caves that the water ran up into, how far we could not tell; smooth walls of rock with streams

flowing over them right into the sea; or these would sink down into green slopes with farms on them; or be cleft into deep valleys over which would show crater-like or pyramidal mountains: or they would be splintered into jagged spires; one of which, single and huge, just at the point of the last ness before we entered this narrow sound, is named the Trolls-finger; and all this always without one inch of beach to be seen; and always when the cliffs sank you could see little white clouds lying about on the hillsides: at last we could see on ahead a narrow opening, so narrow that you could not imagine that we could sail out of it, and then soon the cliffs on our right gave back and showed a great land-locked bay almost like a lake, with green slopes all round it, and a great mountain towering above them at its end, where lay the houses of a little town, Westmanna-haven; they tell us that the water is ten fathom deep close up to the very shore in here, and that it is, as it looks, a most magnificent harbour. After that, on we went toward the gates that led out into the Atlantic; narrow enough they look even now we are quite near; as the ship's nose was almost in them, I saw close beside us a stead with its home-field sloping down to the sea, the people running out to look at us, and the black cattle grazing all about; then I turned to look ahead as the ship met the first of the swell in the open sea, and when I looked astern a very few minutes after I could see nothing at all of the gates we had come out by, no slopes of grass, or valleys opening out from the shore; nothing but a terrible wall of rent and furrowed rocks, the little clouds still entangled here and there about the tops of them: here the wall would be rent from top to bottom and its two sides would yawn as if they would have fallen asunder, here it was buttressed with

great masses of stone that had slipped from its top; there it ran up into all manner of causeless-looking spikes: there was no beach below the wall, no foam breaking at its feet; it was midnight now and everything was grey, and colourless, and shadowless, yet there was light enough in the clear air to see every cranny and nook of the rocks, and in the north-east now the grey sky began to get a little lighter with dawn. I stood near the stern and looked backward a long time, till the coast, which had seemed a great crescent when we came out of the sound, was now a long flat line, and so then I went to bed with the sky brightening quickly."

"I have seen nothing out of a dream," he wrote from Iceland to Mrs. Morris, "so strange as our coming out of the last narrow sound into the Atlantic, and leaving the huge wall of rocks astern in the shadowless midnight twilight: nothing I have ever seen has impressed me so much."

Two days afterwards, early on a grey morning, they sighted the south-eastern coast of Iceland at Berufirth, where the "Diana" had to touch on her way to Reykjavik.

"The sun had not yet shone over the mountains on the east into the firth at whose mouth we were, yet patches of it lay upon the high peaks south-west of where we were: on our left was a dark brown ragged rocky island, Pápey, and many small skerries about it, and beyond that we saw the mainland, a terrible shore indeed: a great mass of dark grey mountains worked into pyramids and shelves, looking as if they had been built and half ruined; they were striped with snow high up, and wreaths of cloud dragged across them here and there, and above them were two peaks and a jagged ridge of pure white snow: we

were far enough presently to look into Berufirth, and to see the great pyramid of Buland's Tindr, which stands a little way down the west side of the firth close by the sea; the sea was perfectly calm, and was clear of mist right up to the shore, and then dense clouds hid the low shore, but rose no higher than the mountain's feet: and as I looked the sun over-topped the east hills and the great pyramid grew red halfway down. The east side of the firth showed the regular Icelandic hillside: a great slip of black shale and sand striped with the green of the pastures, that gradually sloped into a wide grass-grown flat, between hill and sea, on which we could see the home-meads of several steads. On the west side we could see a line of rocks and skerries cut out from the shore, low green slopes behind them, and then the mountain feet; looking up the firth, which was all sunlighted now, the great peaks lowered till they seemed to run into the same black, green-striped hillsides as on the east."

Such was the landscape which he afterwards described through the less precise yet even more vivid medium of verse in the poem of "Iceland First Seen":

> Lo, from our loitering ship
> a new land at last to be seen;
> Toothed rocks down the side of the firth
> on the east guard a weary wide lea,
> And black slope the hillsides above,
> striped adown with their desolate green:
> And a peak rises up on the west
> from the meeting of cloud and of sea,
> Foursquare from base unto point
> like the buildings of Gods that have been,
> The last of that waste of the mountains
> all cloud-wreathed and snow-flecked and grey,
> And bright with the dawn that began
> just now at the ending of day.

Running along the southern coast of Iceland with its awful mountain wall, the "Diana" reached Reykjavik on the afternoon of the 14th of July. Zoega, the guide, "a big fellow, red-headed, blue-eyed, and long-chinned, like a Scotch gardener," met them with the news that the horses had been got. Of these they started with twenty, being a double relay for six riders (the four tourists and two guides) and eight pack-horses. On the journey, the number was increased for various reasons to twenty-eight. One of the two that Morris himself rode, Mouse, was brought back by him to England, and lived many years at Kelmscott. Then with some difficulty, for the transaction almost exhausted the metallic currency of the capital, the money for the journey, 1,000 silver dollars in canvas bags, was procured. Two days passed at Reykjavik in the various preparations, and in visits to the notable people of the town: "the most noteworthy of them was Jón Sigurdson, the President of the Althing, whose editions of Sagas I know very well: he seemed a shy, kind, scholarlike man, and I talked Icelandic all I might to him."

On Monday, the 17th of July, the preparations were completed, and the caravan started on its journey. The route taken had been planned out with the principal object of visiting the scenes of the greater Sagas: first Lithend and Bergthorsknoll on the southern coast; then across the wilderness to the fiords on the northern sea, and over the mountain passes into Laxdale; round the peninsula of Snaefellsness, the land of the Ere-dwellers; and so back to Reykjavik by Thingvalla, the great central place of assembly for Iceland from the heroic age down to the beginning of the present century. The Geysirs, the main object of most Icelandic tourists, which Morris, however, re-

garded with undisguised contempt, were to be taken on the northward journey.

When they got to camp at the end of the first day's travel, "we came into a soft grassy meadow bordered by a little clear stream, and jumped off our horses after a ride of six hours and a half: it was a cold night, though clear and fine, and we fell hard to unpack the tents and pitch them while the guides unburdened the horses, who were soon rolling about in every direction, and then set to work diligently to feed: the tents being pitched, Magnússon and Faulkner set to work to light the fire, while Evans and I went about looking for game, about the hill spurs and the borders of a little tarn between the lava and our camp: it was light enough to see to read; wonderfully clear, but not like daylight, for there were no shadows at all: I turned back often from the slopes to look down on the little camp, and the grey smoke that now began to rise up, and felt an excitement and pleasure not easy to express: till I had to get to my shooting, which I didn't like at all: however, I shot two golden plovers and came back to camp with them."

Mr. Evans did most of the shooting that was done on the journey; Morris took no pleasure in it. "I had to see to my gun," he complains later, "which was rather a heavy charge all through the journey, wanting as much attention as a baby with croup."

From this camping-place they proceeded eastward to the Njala country by Eyrarbakki and Oddi, where they were entertained by Dean Asmundr, "a little hard-bitten apple-cheeked old man, extremely hospitable." "It was a beautiful evening still, and even the eastern sky we saw behind the great mountains of the Eyjafell range was quite red. Oddi lies on a marked knoll or slope, above a great stretch of boggy land

through which Eastern Rangriver winds; the hills under Three-corner, and the long stretch of Fleetlithe gradually leading into the terrible gorges of the ice-mountains, girdle in these grey-green flats: it is a noteworthy place historically, for in fact the men who died here or hereabout still live in people's minds as the writers of most of the great stories and both the Eddas: I don't know if they actually wrote them; it was a mere guess (or tradition perhaps) of the seventeenth century that Saemund the Learned collected the poetic Edda: but at any rate these three men, who all lived here at one time or another of their lives, Saemund, Ari, and Snorri Sturluson, must certainly have been the great guardians of the body of Icelandic lore." Thence the next day they reached Bergthorsknoll, the home of Njal. Here Morris made one of his few and unsuccessful attempts to sketch. It was a thing he could not do. The sketch-book was soon put up again and the scene photographed in words instead.

"Pastures thick with a bright blue gentian, and other flowers (principally white clover) more familiar to me: I turned back once or twice to fix the place in my memory; and here I will recapitulate and tell what Bergthorsknoll looks like to-day, so as to have the matter off my conscience:

"Three mounds something the shape of limpets rising from a bright green home-mead with a smooth turf wall all round it, but divided by a lane river-ward of the stead, which is pitched on the middle mound; a wide shallow 'white' river with black sands sweeping in a curve by the last of the mounds, with a strip of smooth and flowery turf running along its banks: marshy land all round about, for the rest, all channelled with innumerable ruts, getting greyer and

greyer in the distance, till on the south side it meets the sea, from which rise the castle-like rocks of the Westman Isles, and on the north is stopped by the long line of the Lithe, above which the mass of Three-corner shows: westward the great plain seems limitless, but eastward it is soon stopped by the great wall which is the outwork of Eyjafell, dark grey rocks rising without intermediate slopes straight out of the plain, and with the ice-mountains at last rising above them."

From Bergthorsknoll they crossed to Lithend, where the site of Gunnar's hall is shown on a space flattened out of the hillside near the present house; and went up the terrible valley down which the Markfleet comes roaring from the glaciers.

"Past this the cliffs were much higher, and most unimaginably strange: they overhung in some places much more than seemed possible; they had caves in them just like the hell-mouths in the thirteenth-century illuminations; or great straight pillars were rent from them with quite flat tops of grass and a sheep or two feeding on it, however the devil they got there: two or three tail-ends of glacier too dribbled over them hereabouts, and we turned out of our way to go up to one: it seemed to fill up a kind of cleft in the rock wall, which indeed I suppose it had broken down; one could see its spiky white waves against the blue sky as we came up to it. We dismounted and scrambled about it: its great blocks cleft into dismal caves, half blocked up with the sand and dirt it had ground up, and dribbling wretched white streams into the plain below: a cold wind blew over it in the midst of the hot day, and (apart from my having nearly broken my neck on it) I was right glad to be in the saddle again. The great mountain-wall which

closes up the valley with its jagged outlying teeth was right before us: often the wall would be cleft, and you would see a horrible winding street, with stupendous straight rocks for houses on either side: the bottom of the cleft quite level, but with a white glacier stream running out of it, and the whole blocked up at the end by the straight line of the master-mountain. Jón told us how he had gone down this valley in the winter with the snow covering either hillside, and the moon at its brightest; of sheep-gatherings he had been at, where every individual sheep has to be carried on horseback over the fords; of expeditions he had made for the fun of the thing up into the pathless wastes about here; and finally, as we crossed one of the streams that run into Markfleet, he told us the timely and cheerful story of how, riding in the autumn-tide with a party down this valley, they coming to this stream concluded it to be fordless, but nevertheless one of the rashest cried out that he would not be stopped, dashed into the water, where his horse was immediately swept off his legs down stream, and the last they saw of the man was him clutching with both arms round the horse's neck, in which position the bodies of both horse and man were found thrown ashore lower down."

On the way back to Lithend they passed a stead where "the bonder, who was very deep in old lore, was flatteringly anxious to see me. He was a grave, black-bearded, intelligent-looking carle of about fifty, and soon he got discussing with Magnússon and Jón minute probabilities of time and place in the Njala, pretty much as if the thing had happened twenty years ago: from that he got to lamenting the wasteful cutting of the woods in that country-side: as we departed I made a bad shot at the saddle trying to mount, *more*

Icelandico, on the wrong side, and measured my length on the turf: the bonder, without the ghost of a smile on his face, hoped I wasn't hurt, and only expressed his feelings by saying to Magnússon, 'The Skald is not quite used to riding then.'"

From Lithend the party made northward to the Geysirs, "the place," Morris writes indignantly, "which has made Iceland famous to Mangnall's Questions and the rest, who have never heard the names of Sigurd and Brynhild, of Njal, or Gunnar, or Grettir, or Gisli, or Gudrun: not mentioned in any Icelandic writing before the eighteenth century." He did not regain his temper till they were left behind. "The turf is the only nasty bit of camping-ground we have had yet," he notes: "all bestrewn too with feathers and wings of birds, polished mutton-bones, and above all, pieces of paper. And—must I say it?—the place seemed all too near to that possible column of scalding water I had heard so much of: understand, I was quite ready to break my neck in my quality of pilgrim to the holy places of Iceland: to be drowned in Markfleet, or squelched in climbing up Drangey, seemed to come quite in the day's work: but to wake up boiled while one was acting the part of accomplice to Mangnall's Questions was too disgusting." To these comments, however, Mr. Evans adds another, giving a feeling inspired by this strange place which Morris was loth to confess, though he admits to the terror suggested by the boiling mud and quivering earth.

"Near our camp," he tells me, "there were several deep holes of beautiful still, blue, boiling water: it was in these holes we boiled our fish and fetched our hot water: but after we had each been several times, Morris on returning from one of these expeditions said it was so uncanny he could not go again."

They had to stay four days there, however, partly from stress of weather and partly because Faulkner was very unwell. On the 29th of July, on a bright cold morning, they started again northward through the wilderness towards Waterdale and the firths of the North Sea. Six cold days of rain and bitter wind among the "horrible black mountains of the waste," including an exploration of the great cave of Surts-hellir, impressed Morris's imagination with a sense of the terror of the land which never quite left him, and which reappears vividly in his descriptions of the mountain journeys in "The Glittering Plain" and "The Well at the World's End." Their route led over the Erne-water-heath, a dismal highland of bogs and pools on the watershed between the northern and western seas, where Grettir lived so long an outlaw; past Erne-water, where he slew Thorir Red-Beard, "a most mournful desolate-looking place with no signs of life as we rode up but for a swan that rose trumpeting from the lakeside"; and so down at last into Waterdale. The original plan had been to get further north and see Drángey, where Grettir lived strangely for the last three years of his life, and where he died at last in the great fight of the two against the eighteen. But time was running short, and this part of the journey had to be given up; they turned westwards, and crossed the ridges into Midfirthdale, where Bjarg, Grettir's birthplace, stands by its castellated rocks; then on to Thorodstead in Hrútafirth, and so round the end of the long sea-inlet and over the pass into Laxdale. On Sunday afternoon, the 6th of August, they rode into Herdholt.

"The little house that stands over so many stories of the old days is rather new and trim, but picturesque

enough; three long gabled aisles, the turf sides of which are laid herring-bone fashion, and there are elaborate dogvanes on the gables. From the door of it one looks down on to the flats about the river, rising gradually into the slopes of the great bounding hill, where among long straight lines of the grey stone banks that old ice-waves have striped the hillside with, parallel to the main lines of the valley, and sad dull yellow-green bogs, lie two emerald green patches, the túns of two steads; one of them Hauskuld-stead, the parent house of Herdholt. The hill above all this gradually slopes down to Hwammfirth, and above its lower end show two strange-shaped mountains, like a church roof with a turret at the end of it: the spurs of these again run down into the firth, leaving a space of low hills and boggy plain by the water-side: but beyond, and bounding all to the south-west, lies that sea of peaked mountains that are all about Holyfell. The actual waters of Hwammfirth are hidden from sight here because of the shoulder of the spur on which we are, the higher part of which also hides the mountains to the north. Evans and Faulkner went off to pitch the tent, while I spent my time alone in trying to regain my spirits, which had suddenly fallen very low almost ever since we came into Laxdale. Just think, though, what a mournful place this is—Iceland, I mean—setting aside the pleasure of one's animal life there, the fresh air, the riding and rough life, and feeling of adventure;—how every place and name marks the death of its short-lived eagerness and glory: and withal so little is the life changed in some ways: Olaf Peacock went about summer and winter after his live-stock, and saw to his hay-making and fishing, just as this little peak-nosed parson does; setting aside the coffee and brandy, his victuals under his

hall 'marked with famous stories' were just the same the little parson in his ten foot square parlour eats: I don't doubt the house stands on the old ground.—But Lord! what littleness and helplessness has taken the place of the old passion and violence that had place here once—and all is unforgotten; so that one has no power to pass it by unnoticed: yet that must be something of a reward for the old life of the land, and I don't think their life now is more unworthy than most people's elsewhere, and they are happy enough by seeming—yet it is an awful place: set aside the hope that the unseen sea gives you here, and the strange threatening change of the blue spiky mountains beyond the firth, and the rest seems emptiness and nothing else: a piece of turf under your feet, and the sky overhead, that's all: whatever solace your life is to have here must come out of yourself or these old stories, not over hopeful themselves. Something of all this I thought; and besides our heads were now fairly turned homeward, and now and again a few times I felt homesick—I hope I may be forgiven. Also there was that ceaseless wind all day: but now towards night it was grown calmer, and was still very bright, and the day ended with a beautiful and strange sunset; not violent red in the west, but the whole sky suffused with it over light green and grey, with a few bars of bright white clouds dragging over it, and some big dusky rain-clouds low down among the Broadfirth mountains: I stood and watched it changing, till that and rest from the wind, I suppose, made me contented again."

Here the travellers stayed three days, Evans fishing in the Laxá and Morris saturating himself with the traditions in which this region is so rich; Herdholt and Bathstead; Hwamm, the home, in the days of the early settlers, of Queen Aud the Deep-minded, and in

after times the birthplace of Snorri Sturluson; and the "dreadful lonely dale" where Kiartan was beset by Gudrun's brothers, and Bolli struck the dolorous stroke.

This was the furthest point of the journey; and hence the party skirted round the peninsula of Snaefellsness to get back into the Southland without again traversing the wilderness. At Stykkisholm, on Broadfirth, they found a Danish brigantine, the "Holger," in the bay, on her way from Icefirth to Liverpool. The captain offered to take letters, and Morris had time to send a hasty note home.

"There has been but little roughing it," he wrote, "and I find sleeping in a tent very comfortable even when the weather is very cold. The weather has been cold, and rather broken till the last few days; last Thursday week we had a very bad day riding over the wilderness in the teeth of a tremendous storm of snow, rain, and wind. You've no idea what a good stew I can make, or how well I can fry bacon under difficulties. I have seen many marvels and some terrible pieces of country; slept in the home-field of Njal's house, and Gunnar's, and at Herdholt: I have seen Bjarg, and Bathstead, and the place where Bolli was killed, and am now a half-hour's ride from where Gudrun died. I was there yesterday, and from its door you see a great sea of terrible inky mountains tossing about; there has been a most wonderful sunset this evening that turned them golden though. The firth we look on here is full of little islands that breed innumerable eider-ducks, and a firth we crossed yesterday was full of swans. Give dear love to the little ones, and tell them I am going to try to bring them my pretty grey pony home; but if I don't they must not be disappointed, for there may be difficulties,

or he may not turn out well. His name is Falcon, and when he is in good condition he ambles beautifully, fast and deliciously soft; he is about thirteen hands high. I wish you could see us to understand how jolly it is when we have got a good piece of road and the whole train of twenty-eight horses is going a good round trot, the tin cups tinkling, and the boxes rattling. Good-bye, my dear, I have so often thought of the sweet fresh garden at Kelmscott, and you and the little ones in it, and wished you happy."

Poor Falcon's hoofs went wrong after this; he came lame into Reykjavik, and had to be sold there instead of being brought back to England. The fleet of swans on Hwammfirth was one of the most strikingly beautiful sights that the travellers saw. Mr. Evans gives an interesting reminiscence of the occasion. "Every little tarn we passed," he says, "was occupied by a pair of wild swans, where they scatter to breed; but the first fiord we reached on the north coast was filled with hundreds, and they looked such splendid marks shining in the sun that I said how I wished I had a rifle, which brought down on me the most severe reproof from Morris: he called me a British officer,"—Mr. Evans held a commission in the Dorset Yeomanry —"which was his most severe term of contempt."

The journey round the peninsula is a long one, lying now along the shore and now over necks of land from firth to firth. On one of the long peninsulas thus formed, but now out of practicable reach in the time at their disposal, is Ere, the centre of the story of the Eyrbyggja Saga, which had been the first book translated by Morris from the Icelandic. In the beautiful manuscript of his translation, which he had executed in the previous April, he had written some verses which express with great simplicity and sincerity the effect on

him of the Icelandic literature, and the feeling of his own kinship as a tale-teller with the authors of the Sagas. Perhaps he never elsewhere set forth so fully what the meaning of poetry was to him; a help in the darkness until the new day should come, not for one person or another, but for all the world.

Lo here an ancient chronicle
Recording matters that befell
A folk, whose life and death and pain
Might touch the great world's loss and gain
Full little: yet such might had they
They could not wholly pass away:
From mouth to mouth they sent a tale,
That yet for something may avail;
For midst them all a man they wrought,
Who all these words together brought,
Made shadows breathe, quickened the dead,
And knew what silent mouths once said,
Till with the life his life might give
These lived again, and yet shall live.

Where art thou, O thou nameless one?
And dost thou laugh to look upon
My eagerness thy tale to read
Midst such changed hope and fear and need?
Or somewhere near me dost thou stand,
And through the dark reach out thine hand?
Yea, are we friends? Draw nigher then,
Thou tale-teller of vanished men,
For we are of one company
To link the dull years straggling by,
Their lonely hopes and griefs grown cold,
Into a chain of tear-washed gold
That yet shall cling about the Earth
In dawning of her second birth.

Tale-teller, who 'twixt fire and snow
Had heart to turn about and show
With faint half-smile things great and small
That in thy fearful land did fall,
Thou and thy brethren sure did gain
That thing for which I long in vain,

The spell, whereby the mist of fear
Was melted, and your ears might hear
Earth's voices as they are indeed.
Well ye have helped me at my need.

It was not till a week later that the travellers reached Grettir's lair on the Fairwood-fells, "such a savage and dreadful place that it gave quite a new turn in my mind to the whole story, and transfigured Grettir into an awful and monstrous being, like one of the early giants of the world." On the 22nd of August they crossed White-water, and after a day's rest at Reykholt, where Snorri Sturluson lived and died, set forth for Thingvalla, the last goal of their pilgrimage.

"The wind dropped and a long strip of blue-green opened in the south-west, and widened and turned bluer and let the sun out. It is exciting to us to see the indigo-coloured peaks whose shapes we know rising up one after another over the dull heath: and soon we note the ragged screen of rocks before Ball-Jokul, and that other range that runs south from Skjaldbreid, and the whole tumbled sea of peaks that rise between us and the plain of Thingvellir.

"The heath bettered as we rode on, and we got to riding into little valleys now, boggy or sandy at bottom (oftenest the latter), but with the banks about them grown over with heath-berries, sweet grass and flowers, much as it was with our old encampment at Brunnar; at last these open out before us into a wider plain, and we can see Skjaldbreid clear to his feet, and the grey lava we journeyed over that other day, and the aforesaid toothed screen of mountains, ending in a gap through which show mountains a long way off, bright and intense blue under the now bright sunny sky; on the other side of this gap rises a lumpier range gradually drawing toward us, which is Armansfell: and

through this gap lies our way to Thingvellir. We are now come to our old camping stead of Brunnar, and there we bait, not at our encampment on the hillside, but on the grass meadow about the pools: we rest about an hour and then set forward, I greatly excited by the warm day and the thought of the Thingmeads before us. Then passing by our old camp, we follow up a willowy stream that runs under bents edging a sandy plain somewhat willow-grown also, with Skjaldbreid ever on our left, looking no otherwise than when we saw it weeks ago from the east side of it, for in short it is quite round. Then over a neck of shale and rock called Trollahals (Troll's-neck) into a great wide sandy valley, going utterly waste up to the feet of Skjaldbreid, and with a small stream running through it. We are now turning round Skjaldbreid, and can see on his south-west flank two small hills lying that are perfect pyramids to look at from here. We are drawing near to the spurs of Armansfell now, and the wide plain narrows as a hill on our left shuts out the view of Skjaldbreid, and then we are in a great round valley of dark brown sand, as flat as a table and almost without a pebble on it: the shoulder of Armansfell, the haunt of the Land-spirits, rises on the south-west of the valley; and in that corner is a small tarn, for in fact in the wetter times of the year the whole valley is a lake except these slopes on which we are riding now. The valley, open at the side we rode into it, is quite shut in everywhere else, but at the east corner the hills sink into a low neck, which we make for, and scaling it, are in a pass with shaly sides scantily grass-grown here and there. My heart beats, so please you, as we near the brow of the pass, and all the infinite wonder, which came upon me when I came up on to the deck of the 'Diana' to see Iceland for the

first time, comes on me again now; for this is the heart of Iceland that we are going to see: nor was the reality of the sight unworthy. The pass showed long and winding from the brow, with jagged dark hills showing over the nearer banks of it as you went on, and betwixt them was an open space, with a great unseen but imagined plain between you and the great lake, that you saw glittering far away under huge peaked hills of bright blue, with grey-green sky above them, Hengill the highest of them, from the hot springs on whose flank rose into the air a wavering column of snow-white steam.

"Down through the pass now, which gets so steep that we have to dismount, and so narrow that its sides hide the distant view as we get lower; till where the pass, still narrow, widens into Godaskörd, so called after a witch-wife of ancient times, we can see the great grey plain before us, though the nearer mountains now hide the Hengill and those others beyond the lake: now as we get toward the mouth of the pass there rises on our left a little peaked hill, called the Maiden's Seat, because the other side of it looks into the meadows of Hofmannaflötr (Chieftain's-flat), where the men returning from the Althing used to hold games, the women looking on from the hill aforesaid: the pass comes out presently on to grass and bush-grown banks above the meadow, which lies perfectly flat and green under grey cliffs on the other side, which fall away, as they sweep round to us, into grass-grown slopes: westward it opens into the great plain, which is hidden from us again by the slopes on our right: it was a beautiful and historical-looking place.

"We were now fairly in the plain of the Thing-meads; the great round mass of Armansfell, scooped here and there into shallow dales (dal-verpi, dale-

warps), with a bunch of snow lying on them in places, is the north boundary of it; and opposite to that, on the other side of the now unseen lake, is the noble Hengill and its flanking mountain: these two change no more for us, but on the south-east we have at first a ragged toothed wall of clinker running down from the flank of Skjaldbreid, which falls after a while into a gap through which pours the great sea of lava down the slowly sloping side of Skjaldbreid: as we ride along (over the lava now), we come opposite to a flat-topped hill some way down the lava-stream, and just below it opens a huge black chasm, that runs straight away south toward the lake, a great double-walled dyke, but with its walls tumbled and ruined a good deal in places: the hill is the Raven-burg, and the chasm the Raven-rift. But as we turn west we can see, a long way off across the grey plain, a straight black line running from the foot of Armansfell right into the lake, which we can again see hence, and some way up from the lake a white line cuts the black one across. The black and the white line are the Great Rift (Almanna-Gjá) and Axewater tumbling over it. Once again that thin thread of insight and imagination, which comes so seldom to us, and is such a joy when it comes, did not fail me at this first sight of the greatest marvel and most storied place of Iceland.

"When we first came into the plain it was on the edge of the lava, sandy but grown over with willow and grass; we are on pure lava now, which is also far from barren, being much grown about with grass and willow, but chiefly birch; everywhere, however, the bare molten rock shows in places, never tossed up in waves, but always curdled like the cooling fire-stream it once was, and often these strands or curdles are twisted regularly like a rope. Over this lava-plain we

rode to a little stead called Hraun-tún that lay on a low mound of soft grass, with a few great boulders scattered about it, rising like an island from the much-riven lava-sea; there we struck the regular road from the south-east to Thingvellir, and hastened along it at about eight o'clock on the loveliest and clearest of evenings. On our way we crossed by a narrow bridge-like rock over a terrible chasm, deep, straight-sided, and with water at the bottom, into a little sunken plain nearly round, all grass-grown and smooth and flat, round which the lava has run without breaking into it: a small stream follows the inside of the lava wave nearly all round this strange place, and through its opening we ride into the lava again; over a wave-top and into the trough of it, as it seems, and then on to another wave—and lo, there we are on the lower side of the Great Rift, a grass-grown, shrub-grown slope, with a huge wall of grey rock rising on the other side of the chasm, as perpendicularly as though the plummet had ruled it. It was getting dusk when we got there, and we had hit the Rift rather high up, so we rode straight down toward the lake along the Rift-side, the great wall with a fantastic coping of clinker ever on our right, till we saw, at the end of a bight of the lake, an undulating bright green tún with a church and stead on their little mounds, and between us and them a flat green plain with Axewater winding about it most sweetly, till, straightening itself on the Rift-ward side of the stead, it ran straight for the lake, widening as it went.

"We got leave to encamp on the tún down by the side of Axewater, and soon had our tents up on a beautiful piece of mossy turf close to the water's edge, almost under the shadow of the Great Rift, whose wonderful cliff rose into the moonlit sky a few rods on the

other side of the river, and was all populous with ravens that kept crying out and croaking long after we were settled there."

The next day, "a most beautiful morning, warm and soft like a fine day of latter May in England," he visited the famous Hill of Laws. "A deep rift in the lava splits into two arms having a little island in the midst, bridged by a narrow space on which two men could barely stand abreast. When you are in the island it widens and slopes upward higher and higher, till at last, where the two arms of the rift meet, there is a considerable cliff above the dark dreadful-looking rift and its cold waters: a dozen yards from this is a little mound rising from the surface of the island, which, it the Hill of Laws is the heart of Iceland, is the heart of the Hill of Laws, for here stood the Speaker at Law, and every year gave forth the law: the whole island is not a large church for the ceremony; it might hold some five hundred men close-packed; but surely 'tis one of the most dramatic spots in all Iceland, and Grim Goatshoe, who picked it out for the seat of the Althing (he had a penny for his pains from every householder of Iceland), must have been a man of poetic insight. It is a good deal raised above the level of the Valley of Axewater; the rift all round it is deep and wide, I should say sixteen feet wide at the narrowest, where you can see, many, many feet below, the rocks all blue and purple through the clearest water in the world; this is the place that they call Flosi's Leap; for the tradition (not the Njala Saga) says that Flosi the Burner leapt across it to join his men who were drawn up outside the Berg: and they say he was in all his arms when he leapt. The Hill of Laws is all covered with sweet deep grass, and the heath-berries grow all down the sides of its rift. As you stand here

you look, as I said, across the grassy valley through which Axewater, having tumbled over the sheer height of the upper wall of the Great Rift, and cleft the lower wall through, wanders serpentine, making little sandy or grassy islets as it goes; the most obvious of which, a mere patch of turf, nearly level with the river, but in the very midst of the plain, is called the Battle-Holm, because there the judicial combats were held.

"You must suppose that only the Lawman and some of the chiefs, with the jurors of the courts, had their place on the Hill of Laws; the main body of the people were on the other side of the water-filled rift, which in fact made the Hill of Laws a fortress easily defensible in those days so lacking in good shot-weapons. Across the plain of Axewater, on the first slopes of the lower wall of the Great Rift, were set up the booths of the different districts, going all down the Rift-side right to the lake: just opposite where the stead now stands is a breach in this lower wall, through which runs the Reykjavik road; and the slope on the lakeward side of this is known as the site of the booth of Snorri the Priest, whereby he stood with his men in this very gap in the Rift-wall at the Battle of the Althing, prepared to help the winners moderately, and make peace if he could do so to his own advantage.

"Just in the very midst of the Hill of Laws rises a low mound regular in shape, and still having on it signs of the concentric rows of seats on which the jurors of the court sat.

"You must not forget, when thinking of all this, that the huge wall of the Great Rift does verily bar the whole plain from the slopes of Armansfell to the lake; so that no ordinary man could scale it except in that one place by Snorri's booth aforesaid: and the long line of it cuts clean against the sky with never a

mountain rising over it till Armansfell thrusts up a broad shoulder at the further end."

The travels now were ended: nothing remained but the day's ride back into Reykjavik, and so home. Two days, clear and golden-soft, were spent at Thingvalla: then the weather broke in the night, and they struck their last camp and rode off in a downpour of driving rain.

"At last we came, with a great jump in my heart, to the sea, and riding past a creek or two, could see a long way off the beacon on the hill above Reykjavik, and very dimly the harbour and ships lying there; then we turned from the sea a little, and presently our road ran into the one that led to Bolavellir, our first camp in Iceland; thence away the road was almost like a road in England, and we swung along a great pace, keeping quite close together, the horses knowing well that they were coming near their journey's end. There we were past the beacon, and into the little town; and I, heeding not other people, galloped my best to Mistress Maria's house, jumping off my horse (Mouse, to wit) just six weeks to the minute since I had mounted him before, by the paling of the queer little weedy-looking garden before the black, white-windowed cottage that I have seen in night-dreams and day-dreams so often since. Well, Miss Sæmundson, who met me presently, told me that there were no letters for me there, so off I galloped for the post-office. Why doesn't one drop down, or faint, or do something of that sort when it comes to the uttermost in such matters? I walked in quite coolly in appearance and gave Mr. Finsen my name scribbled big on a piece of paper; he shuffled the letters and gave me eleven: I opened one from Ellis there and then, thinking that from him I should hear

any bad news in the simplest form: though indeed the eleven letters at first glance did somewhat cure my terror, for there was no one dead at least.

"So home I went soberly to another lodging than last time, and thence, after reading my letters, with not more than the usual amount of disappointment and wondering at people's calmness I suppose, to Mrs. Maria's house again, where was dinner and the courtly old carle Sir Henry Holland, whose age (eighty-four) I thought was the most interesting thing about him. I was rather low after all, and cowed by the company, and a sense of stiffness after our joyous rough life just ended."

The "Diana" came in that night, and after three days at Reykjavik in the wind and wet, busy with selling the horses and seeing the museum and dining with the Governor, they sailed for home on the last day of August. As on the outward voyage, the "Diana" put in at Berufirth for a few hours. "At noon the signal gun was fired, and we were off presently, the pilot's boat towed alongside of us; I watched it going through the water, cold green under the shadow of our sides: the pilot's son sat in the stern, a tall, handsome-looking youth of about eighteen, 'wide-faced, grey-eyed, and open-eyed,' the very type of a northern youth, as he sat looking dreamily out to sea: his father went over the side into the boat presently, and they cast off, and soon even the shadows of the rocks faded into the mist, and I had seen the last of Iceland." The voyage back was uneventful. In the evening of the 6th of September, a soft warm grey day, the "Diana" came along the pier at Granton in time for Morris to catch the night mail for London. "I was curious to see," he writes on the last page of his diary, "what effect the trees would have on me

when day dawned, but they did not have much. I thought the houses and horses looked so disproportionately big for the landscape that it all looked like a scene at a theatre."

"I think I should have plenty to tell you of my travels if I saw you," he writes to Mrs. Baldwin a few days after his return, "but I am the worst of letter writers; besides I made a sort of journal which I intend writing out, perhaps may manage to do so to part of it in time to send Georgie while she is staying with you, and then you can read it if you care to; anyhow you shall see it when it is done if you like, though I believe it will be but a poor specimen of its class. Moreover, I confess to a dread of setting to work on it: it is true that the journey was altogether successful, and that I think I have gained in many ways by it; but it seems such a long way off now, and there is a bit of one's life gone; and the world so much the narrower to me because of it: and when I look over it I am afraid of having to grin sourly at this bit of enthusiasm, and be puzzled at that bit of high spirits; and note here how I refused to acknowledge a disappointment, and there how I pretended not to be weary—and in short—all the rest of it; something in its way like looking at a drawerful of old letters—if anybody ever did venture on such a bold act, which I doubt.

"I rather miss the mountains, I must say, which is not what I expected, for I use to consider myself a hater of them: to-day I had to go out on business to a place near Wimbledon, and there was what people called a pretty view there, and I thought how dull it looked, and that after all people were right to build villas and plant red geraniums about it: my own little old house by Lechlade though is sweet and innocent

enough, and though it has a sadness about it, which is not gloom but the melancholy born of beauty I suppose, it is very stimulating to the imagination. I am going down there on Saturday, where I expect to enjoy making the acquaintance again of the little pony that carried me in my six weeks' ride, the bravest and best tempered of little beasts : you should have seen him picking his way in one of those dismal bogs, where if you sneeze, the earth, or rather the roots of the grass, trembles violently : they say, however, that the Icelandic ponies get lazy among the fat pastures and soft air of England—small blame to them."

He had already been down to Kelmscott, where his family, with Rossetti, had been living during his Iceland voyage. On the 23rd of September he went there again, stopping on the way at Oxford to buy a boat for the new house, and driving over from Oxford up the beautiful autumnal Thames valley. Early in October the long summer came at last to an end. Mouse, the pony, was left at Kelmscott, where he grew fat and lazy, and was much loved by the children. The little biography which one of them gives me, five and twenty years after, makes a pretty picture of that peaceful home.

" He was gentle and quiet, though not without slyness : for I remember there was one gate-post against which, when I went out for a ride, he used often to try to rub me off his broad back. I'm ashamed for my horsemanship to think how often the rogue had his way. Father used to ride him about the country a good bit at first. Then I jogged about with him, and he used to be put to a little basket-carriage, and go meandering along in a meditative way. He got enormously fat on our coarse thick plentiful English grass, with little to do ; and I used to imagine him

lonely, and yearning for the fun and clatter and hardships of his Iceland life among his friends, as he stood there with his head stretched forward looking intensely meditative. One day, when the hunt passed through our home-meadows, the excitement of horses and hounds was too much for the lonely philosopher: he threw up his head and, fat as he was, bundled over a hedge and actually followed the hounds a good way. I missed the gentle funny little animal much when he died."

CHAPTER IX

LOVE IS ENOUGH: PERIOD OF ILLUMINATIONS: DISSOLUTION OF THE FIRM

1871-1874

As soon as he returned to England, Morris resumed the work of illuminating which had already for about a year been one of the main occupations of his leisure, and which for between three and four years more held a foremost place in his interest. During these years he produced a number of books, some completed and others not, in very various styles and all of remarkable beauty. His earliest experiments in the art of illumination, made fourteen or fifteen years before, had been already remarkable not only for an all but complete mastery of colour, but for the genius with which they reproduced the tone and spirit of the earlier mediæval work, as he had studied it first in the painted books of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries at the Bodleian Library, and afterwards in those at the British Museum. But they were full of technical defects in drawing; and their deficiency was most marked in the drawing of the letters of the text which is commonly known by the name of handwriting. Morris's own handwriting had been then, and for years afterwards continued to be, decidedly bad: while not illegible,

it was slovenly, and had neither beauty nor distinction. When he took up the art of illumination in 1870, he began to study handwriting as a fine art. By practice he soon mastered it; and the texts of his painted books show a steady advance in skill of execution. The reaction on his own cursive hand was marked and immediate. The beautiful handwriting familiar to his friends for the last five and twenty years was directly due to his study and practice of the art in the period of his work as an illuminator. In the decoration of his painted books—as in everything which had to do with pattern and colour—there is also an advance in splendour of colouring and breadth of design, but the earliest are in their simpler treatment as faultless as the latest: the art of decoration seems to have been born in him and to come from his hands full-grown.

The "Book of Verses," a selection of his own lyrical poems, completed on the 26th of August, 1870, and given by him to Mrs. Burne-Jones, is the first, and though not the finest, perhaps on the whole the most beautiful, of all his painted books. In this book he broke completely away from the mediæval method. That method reappears, transformed through his own original genius, in the colour and design of the great manuscript Virgil, in which his art both as scribe and as illuminator culminates. But here there is a modernness which owes nothing to any tradition: and a freshness, a direct appeal to first principles and instincts, which (as in the case of his earliest wall-papers) charms by its simplicity and fitness even more than the later and technically finer work. If, as has been sometimes thought possible, ornamented handwriting should again take its place among the popular arts, it is in the direction indicated by this beautiful volume that its most hopeful way would seem to lie.

The book is on paper, and consists of fifty-one pages. It was not wholly executed by his own hand. One of the pictures was painted by Burne-Jones, and the remainder, including a portrait-head of the author on the first page, by Mr. Fairfax Murray; and the painted letters were coloured by Mr. George Wardle, who also drew in part of the ornament from Morris's designs. To produce a painted book in the full beauty of which it is capable, Morris considered that division of labour was advantageous: it was not likely that the scribe and the miniaturist would be found at their best in the same person, and here too, as in larger work, he found the excellence as well as the pleasure of art to lie in co-ordination of skilled workmen. Other books, however, were executed by him unaided. The next done after the "Book of Verses" was a manuscript, also on paper, of his translation of the Eyrbyggja Saga; a folio of 239 pages, slightly ornamented and without pictures. This manuscript, with the single exception, carefully noted by him upon it, of the laying on of the gold leaf on three pages, which was done by one of the workmen at Queen Square, was wholly written and ornamented by his own hand. It was finished in April, 1871; and before it was finished, he had begun a new book on vellum with continuous and elaborate ornament. This was a copy of FitzGerald's "Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám."

This manuscript, given by him to Mrs. Burne-Jones, may take rank, by its elaborate beauty, as one of his chief masterpieces. It was finished on the 16th of October, 1872, after being a year and a half in hand. On its tiny scale—twenty-three pages measuring six inches by three and a half—it is a volume of immense labour and exquisite workmanship. On eighteen of the pages the illumination is confined to a central

space of less than three inches by two, with a title in gold above each. In that central space, alongside and between the verses, is a running ornament of flowers and fruits. On the other five pages the margins are completely filled with floriated design, among which are minute but beautifully drawn and coloured figures, the lower half of the last page being also filled by a design of two figures holding a scroll. The treatment of the fruit and flower work is an admirable adaptation of an almost Pre-Raphaelite naturalism to the methods and limits of ornamental design: the raspberries on page 14 and the honeysuckles on page 21 may be specially instanced as unsurpassable in their truth to nature and their decorative effect.

The fine lambskin vellum for this, as for his other manuscripts, he procured from Rome. The English lime-dressed vellum used for a few special copies of "Love is Enough" had been found disagreeable in surface and almost useless for fine work. Owing to the continuous demand for vellum at the Vatican, the tradition of its proper manufacture had been preserved more fully at Rome than elsewhere. But sometimes the orders from the Vatican absorbed the whole annual output, and no skins were to be had. When the Kelmscott Press was started, a sufficient supply of Roman vellum could not be procured for it; and an English maker, after many unsuccessful trials, at last succeeded in producing sheets of a quality nearly equal to the Roman.

Before this Omar Khayyám was finished, he had begun another copy of the same poem for Burne-Jones on paper. This was executed more in the style of the "Book of Verses," but with somewhat more profuse ornament; and in it Burne-Jones himself painted six extraordinarily beautiful pictures, each in a different

scheme of colour, and showing, although each is only slightly over four inches by two in size, his finest qualities of design and invention. The floral decoration which runs down the margins and between the verses is in pale colours, green, blue, yellow, pink, and crimson, with a preponderance of green. The initial letters of the lines are alternated in gold and colours, the page always beginning with a gold letter, and one colour being used down each page. The pictures are inclosed in gold frames, unburnished; and on the pages with pictures and those facing them the whole of the illumination is enriched with burnished gold throughout. This book was given by Burne-Jones to Miss Frances Graham (Mrs. J. F. Horner), and is now in her possession.

Immediately after his return from Iceland, Morris had also begun the composition of a new poem, with the origination and completion of which his work as an illuminator is intimately connected. "Morris has been here twice since his return," Rossetti wrote to William Bell Scott from Kelmscott on the 2nd of October, "for a few days at first and just now for a week again. He is now back in London, and this place will be empty of all inmates by the end of this week, I think. Morris has set to work with a will on a sort of masque called 'Love is Enough,' which he means to print as a moderate quarto, with woodcuts by Ned Jones and borders by himself, some of which he has done really very beautifully. The poem is, I think, at a higher point of execution perhaps than anything that he has done, having a passionate lyric quality such as one found in his earliest work, and of course much more mature balance in carrying out. It will be a very fine work."

The poem in its first form was finished by the be-

ginning of winter, but it was afterwards very much altered. It gave him more real trouble than any other of his poems. "I have come down here for a fortnight," he writes from Kelmscott on the 13th of February, 1872, "to see spring beginning, a sight I have seen little of for years, and am writing among the grey gables and rook-haunted trees, with a sense of the place being almost too beautiful to live in. I have been in trouble with my own work, which I couldn't make to march for a long time; but I think I have now brought it out of the maze of re-writing and despondency, though it is not exactly finished." For other reasons, to be mentioned presently, it was not published till the end of the year.

"Love is Enough" is probably the least familiar to most readers of Morris's longer poems; but apart from any question of purely poetical quality, it is in some technical respects much the most remarkable. It reconstitutes, under modern conditions, forms of later mediæval poetry which had long fallen into disuse. The fluctuating contest between epic and romantic treatment which is visible in "The Earthly Paradise" is here put aside; they are replaced by a dramatic form which combines qualities taken from both, but is itself of a quite distinct kind: a kind which was being gradually worked up to in England during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the Renaissance burst in with a crash and produced the new world of the Elizabethans. The distinctively mediæval structure, with its carefully planned architectural arrangement, is resumed in a manner which dramatic poetry had abandoned for over three hundred years. In his use of receding planes of action which yet do not lie in what might be called, by an easy metaphor from another art, any real aerial per-

spective, he approximates dramatic poetry to the manner of treatment of those late mediæval tapestries, the finest of which were his ideal of decorative arrangement. The outer frame is given by the rustic lovers, Giles and Joan. Within this is a second plane, in which stand the Emperor and Empress. Within this again, in the central plane, is Love as the interpreter of the action, both inwards and outwards. On the fourth plane is the main action itself, the dramatic interlude of the Freeing of Pharamond: and on the last and inmost of all, subtilized out of any definite personality and charged with all the distilled emotion of the fourfold action, is "the Music," the final and interpenetrating spirit of the whole work. The detailed structure of this multiplex arrangement is worked out with an extraordinary ingenuity and elegance. Morris's best decorative designs have just such an ordered intricacy, such a free yet precisely adjusted pattern. Most notable of all is the instinctive art which keeps all these planes of action interlaced or interfused, so that the whole poem constitutes a single design. The problem was of the same kind as he had to face in designing for wall-papers or chintzes, that of so arranging the "repeat" that the pattern should flow continuously over the whole space to be filled and not fall asunder into patches. It is here further complicated by another condition, a fact of texture, as it would be called if the matter being dealt with were a textile fabric. To make the different planes of action distinct, each has its own metre. These metres are the short octosyllabic couplet, the heroic decasyllable, the alliterative unrhymed verse of the body of the play, and, for the "Music," an exquisite invention of rhymed dactylics. The way in which they are interwoven is a masterpiece of metrical

device. In the two scenes of the induction (to use the appropriate term of the Renaissance dramatists) the ground is laid of the whole metrical system of the poem; in the first scene by a single phrase of the Music; in the second by a full period of the Music and a single phrase of the alliterative dialogue-metre. Thereafter follows the play itself, in five scenes, with the Music at the end of each, and before and after each the interpretation, in stately heroic metre, given by Love before the dropped curtain. But in the fourth scene, by an ingenuity the most elaborately simple, the whole of the elements of the fivefold play are interlaced. The scene has passed like the other three; the Music has followed; and Love, clad as a pilgrim, has spoken before the curtain. But now, instead of a fresh scene following, the curtain rises again on the same scene; and Love goes on to the stage, drops the heroic verse in which he has hitherto spoken, and holds a dialogue with Pharamond in the alliterative play-metre: during which, the Music, hitherto only sung between the scenes, mingles with the play from without, growing nearer and nearer till, at its last cadence, Azalais enters. And at the end of this scene, the dialogue-metre, without a check, becomes, for two couplets, the rhymed dactylic metre of the Music, as though the lovers, in the exaltation of their meeting, had become for a moment one with the central harmony of things.

The architectural instinct, the faculty of design in its highest form, which was the quality in which Morris's unique strength lay, was never applied by him with more certain and delicate a touch. And the ingenuities of the metrical treatment in which this design is worked out are almost equally striking. The rhymed iambic verse, whether of eight or of ten syll-

ables, was his old familiar medium; nor is it used here with greater skill than he had used it in "The Earthly Paradise," though even here we may find subtle adaptations to the dramatic method. But the rhymed dactylics to which reference has been made —a metre at once one of the rarest, one of the most difficult, and if successfully used, one of the most hauntingly beautiful, which the English language uses —are a noble development of that single exquisite fragment, "Pray but One Prayer for Me," which had been one of his very earliest achievements in poetry. And the alliterative metre which he invented, or re-invented, for the body of the play deserves a more serious notice.

The fact that the whole of English poetry, from the sixteenth century downwards, is written in metres of foreign origin, only naturalized in English through the long and difficult practice of centuries, is one which, however familiar to students of mediæval literature, is little-realized beyond the circle of historians and scholars. As was the case in Latin literature for a period of about the same length, the foreign metres, after a time of struggle during which the native metre produced its finest achievements, conquered it and drove it completely below the surface. But, as was the case in Latin literature, the native metre not only had a deep influence on the special development of the imported metres, but retained an affinity to the structure of the language which made it tend to re-appear when the dominant metrical forms were exhausted from over-use. Here, at the present day, the parallel ceases. But if the argument from the Latin analogy were seriously pressed, it might be conjectured that the future forms of English poetry would be, not, indeed, the form of the mediæval English alliterative

metre,—for the English language, like the Latin, has developed too widely and changed too deeply in structure to revert to its Saturnians,—but forms essentially based on the same metrical principles. Of the experiments in this direction—still no more than tentative efforts amid the overwhelming predominance of the normal rhymed iambic metres—"Love is Enough" is one of the first and the most successful.

It was not indeed from any such wide and general considerations that Morris was led to essay its use. He simply went by known facts. As he had followed the metres of Chaucer for his narrative poems, he followed the metres of the earliest English plays for this dramatic poem. In these he found the alliterative Middle English verse, freed from the rigid rules which had governed it up to the close of the fourteenth century, and adapted to the changed modulation of a language which had by that time dropped its weak vowel-endings; but at the same time cramped and slightly vulgarized by an attempt to add the foreign enrichment of rhyme. For this metre, he instinctively felt, rhyme was unsuited, unless where it was desired, for special occasions, to raise it by this additional ornament to a lyric tension. But rhyme was for the metre a purely artificial importation: the solution, then, was quite simple: do away with the rhymed endings, and there is left a verse as elastic and varied as the regular alliterative verse native to England, less difficult to write, and better adapted to modern vocabulary and intonation of speech. The experiment has remained an isolated one. He never repeated it himself; for his translation of "Beowulf," a *tour de force* executed for a special object, keeps as closely as possible to the original metre of early English poetry, with its rigid metrical laws, and its mouldings (if a metaphor

from architecture be allowed) axe-hewn, rather than undulating under the chisel. Nor did he succeed in reconstituting the fine and flexible Middle English metre as a practical form of verse for modern poetry. Morris himself felt that this new poem was both tentative and difficult, and its failure to make any impression on a large audience was received by him with perfect equanimity. It was a thing he had done to please himself, and he thought highly of it, but he did not expect it to please other people to anything like the same degree.

Once more the attempt to produce a volume in a beautifully decorated outward form had to be abandoned. He designed, and cut on wood, borders for the pages of what would have been a very beautiful small quarto. In some copies these were to have been filled in with colours and gilding, so that it would have been another illuminated book, with the text printed, not written. Besides the borders, there were to have been pictures, to which the whole scheme of the book lends itself with special aptness. Some of the scenes are written, as it were, directly for illumination. In the first scene of the play, there is a series of ornate comparisons—Nimrod carved on the high-seat in the hall, Argo woven on the hangings of the guard-room, Mars painted in the window of the council-chamber—which are introduced with exactly the decorative effect of pictures within the great initial letters of a painted book. The transitions, too, from one part of the poem to another call out to be made through some reinforcement of either music or pictures.

"Love is Enough" bears the marks of all the varied sources of romance from which its author had drawn in earlier work, perhaps with the effect of a structure too composite for easy apprehension. The story, at

least in its main outline, the theme of a king who gives up his kingdom for love in the valley, is taken from the Mabinogion, and is in feeling intimately Celtic. The names of Pharamond and Azalais—Teutonic words made musical by the speech of Central or Southern France—carry the mind back to some dim Merovingian epoch in which the ox-wagons of Frankish kings rolled through the mountain gorges of Auvergne and the vineyards of Burgundy. The representation of the play before an Emperor and Empress brings it vaguely within the central current of European art towards the close of the Middle Ages: and touches of landscape here and there show that the author's mind was still full of Iceland.

It was the last complete poem of any magnitude which Morris wrote for several years. For some time he had been feeling about for new methods of literary expression: after this poem was written he became once more absorbed in handicraft and the productions of his workshops or of his own unaided hand. Some months before, this feeling after new vehicles had led him to begin what is certainly the most singular of his writings, a novel of contemporary life. The story dealt with the love of two brothers for the same woman, and was evidently going to take a tragic turn. As far as the development of the story gives any indication, rather more than one-third of it had been written when it was abandoned. The fragment was swiftly written and never revised. But revision was, as has been already noted, at no time a thing much to his taste, or for which he had any aptitude. No further criticism need be passed on the fragment than what was said of it by Morris himself a year later. Mrs. Baldwin, to whom he had given sympathetic counsel in her own first efforts at narrative prose, had

expressed a wish to see what he had done. He sent her the manuscript with the following letter:

"Queen Square,
"June 22nd, 1872.

"Dear Louie,

"Herewith I send by book-post my abortive novel: it is just a specimen of how not to do it, and there is no more to be said thereof: 'tis nothing but landscape and sentiment: which thing won't do. Since you wish to read it, I am sorry 'tis such a rough copy, which roughness sufficiently indicates my impatience at having to deal with prose. The separate parcel, paged 1 to 6, was a desperate dash at the middle of the story to try to give it life when I felt it failing: it begins with the letter of the elder brother to the younger on getting *his* letter telling how he was going to bid for the girl in marriage. I found it in the envelope in which I had sent it to Georgie to see if she could give me any hope: she gave me none, and I have never looked at it since. So there's an end of my novel-writing, I fancy, unless the world turns topsides under some day. Health and merry days to you, and believe me to be

"Your affectionate friend,
"WILLIAM MORRIS."

Henceforth, but for a few lyrics, original or adapted from Icelandic and Danish ballads, his writing was confined to translation until he began his great epic of "Sigurd the Volsung."

The workshops at Queen Square had been slowly encroaching on the living part of the house. The manager was continually appealing for more room to

carry on the work, which was cramped as it was, and which Morris was always, almost without his will, extending in one direction or another by fresh inventions or experiments. "I am going with Janey to-morrow," he writes on the 25th of November, "to look at a house in Hammersmith in Theresa Terrace: it is Mason the painter's house, who died about a month ago. We must, it seems, turn out of this house next spring, for Wardle wants it all for the business." Towards the end of 1872 the family removed from Queen Square. Morris himself kept two rooms for his own private use, and the rest of the house was turned over to the use of the firm, the drawing-room being made into a much-needed show-room, and the upper floors into additional workshops. The new house was not the Hammersmith one, but another not far from it, on the high road between Hammersmith and Turnham Green, in a rambling suburb of orchards and market-gardens, and with easy access to the Thames down Chiswick Lane. Before the building of the District Railway it was a pleasant, if somewhat remote, suburb. The house itself was very small, "a very good sort of house for one person to live in, or perhaps two," as its mistress afterwards described it; but there was a large garden, and the quiet was complete. Here Morris lived for six years. The parting from Queen Square took place with little effusion of sentiment. Morris himself was too elated by the prospect of setting up a little dye-shop in the empty basement to care much about the abandonment of the house. It had never been more than a temporary home forced on him by disagreeable necessity.

On the 23rd of January, 1873, he writes, "We have cleared out of Queen Square as far as our domesticity is concerned: I keep my study and little bedroom

here, and I daresay, as time goes on, I shall live here a good deal: for the rest, we have taken a little house on the Turnham Green road, about twenty minutes' walk from the Hammersmith Station; and otherwise easy to get at because of the omnibuses: it is a *very* little house with a pretty garden, and I think will suit Janey and the children: it is some half-hour's walk from the Grange, which makes it quite a little way for me; on the other hand, I can always see any one I want at Queen Square quite safe from interruption, so in all ways it seems an advantage—does it not? Withal I never have had any sentiment of affection for this house, though so much has happened to me while I have lived here. I have always felt myself like nothing but a lodger here. Nevertheless, there is something profoundly dismal about the empty rooms here that strikes a chill on one."

"I am going to have the little ones home," he writes the following day, "to Turnham Green to-day; 'tis a month since I have seen them. Jenny is twelve years old now: bless us, how old I'm getting. Except the work for the firm, in which I am rather busy, I am doing nothing now but translations: I should be glad to have some poem on hand, but it's no use trying to force the thing; and though the translating lacks the hope and fear that makes writing original things so absorbing, yet at any rate it is amusing and in places even exciting."

The following letter was written a few days later to Mrs. Coronio, who was then living at Athens. The friendship between her and Morris was affectionate and unbroken through life.

"26, Queen Square,
"Feb. 11th, 1873.

"My dear Aglaia,

"You see our letters crossed: and I'm glad I wrote to excuse myself before I got your letter taking me to task. I am in much better condition now than I was when I wrote last: I suppose the change has done me good: we are quite settled in our new house, and I find it very pleasant: my own room is particularly cheerful and pretty, and I can work in it with a much better heart than in the dingy room at Queen Square. I go most days to the Square though, and come back when I feel inclined, or not at all when I feel inclined: all this involves a good deal of walking, which, no doubt, is good for me: it seems quite a ridiculously little way to the Grange now, after the long way it used to be. Last Sunday, Ned came to breakfast with me, and we had a pleasant hour or two. I am very hard at work at one thing or another; firm's work for one thing. I should very much like to make the business quite a success, and it can't be, unless I work at it myself. I must say, though I don't call myself money-greedy, a smash on that side would be a terrible nuisance; I have so many serious troubles, pleasures, hopes and fears, that I have not time on my hands to be ruined and get really poor: above all things it would destroy my freedom of work, which is a dear delight to me. My translations go on apace, but I am doing nothing original: it can't be helped, though sometimes I begin to fear I am losing my invention. You know I very much wish not to fall off in imagination and enthusiasm as I grow older: there have been men who, once upon a time, have done things good or noteworthy, who have got worse

with time and have outlived their power; I don't like that at all. On the other hand, all great men that have not died young have done some of their best work when they were getting quite old. However, it won't do to force oneself about it, and I certainly enjoy some of the work I do very much, and one of these days my Heimskringla will be an important work.

"Iceland gapes for me still this summer: I grudge very much being away from the two or three people I care for so long as I must be, but if I can only get away in some sort of hope and heart I know it will be the making of me. I am very much disappointed that you are not coming back before: I quite looked for you this month.

"Yes, truly, letters are very unsatisfactory; they would do very well if one could write them at our best times; but continually one has to sit down to them dull and cold and worried, with the thoughts all slipping away from us, till the sheet is filled up with trivialities—as this will be I fear—only there is something about the look of the writing of anyone one is fond of, that is familiar and dear and saves one from utter disappointment, and one feels that the stiff awkward sentences all about nothing or little have still something of a soul in them. Think what an excitement that day was for me when I got letters after eight weeks in the Iceland journey: lord! how my heart did go thump thump as I galloped up to the post-office at Reykjavik!

"I wonder how you will feel at the changes in the house here: Janey's room has already got the workmen's benches in it: the big room is bare and painty; there is hammering and sawing and running up and down stairs going on; and all looks strange, and as yet somewhat wretched. It doesn't touch me very much I must say though: for this long time past I

have, as it were, carried my house on my back: but the little Turnham Green house is really a pleasure to me;—may all that be a good omen! Yet you must come and see me here too when you come home, if you won't be too much terrified at my housekeeper, who is like a troll-wife in an Icelandic story: with a deep bass voice, big and O *so* ugly!

"We have had cold weather enough lately, snow and a dreadful east wind; all of which I don't care a penny about to say the truth.

"On Saturday I am going down to Cambridge, to Magnússon, to do Icelandic: as stupid over the language as you others who are such quick linguists would think me, I am really getting on with it now: when I am down there, which has been once or twice, we all talk nothing but Icelandic together.

"Well, I had best make an end now before I get too dull. Once again forgive me for not writing to you oftener: I have really had a hard time of it: but I hope things have taken a long turn now, and that I shall be something worth as a companion when I see you again; which I look forward to very much indeed. Write soon again, please, and tell me how you are.

"Good-bye, then, with love and best wishes.

"I am your affectionate

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

With a mind still so full of his first journey to Iceland and so excited at the prospect of a second, it is not surprising that his first visit to Italy, which took place this spring, was something of an anti-climax. It was a very short one, and gave him little satisfaction. With the noble Italian art of the earlier Renaissance he had but little sympathy: for that of the later Renaissance and the academic traditions he had

nothing but unmixed detestation. Some time in these years his old fellow-pupil, Mr. Bliss, then engaged on researches among the archives of the Vatican, met him in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and pressed him to come with him to Rome. His reply was too characteristic to be forgotten. "Do you suppose," he said, "that I should see anything in Rome that I can't see in Whitechapel?"

Even the earlier and, to his mind, the far more interesting and beautiful work of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Italy did not appeal to him in the same way as the contemporary art of England or Northern France. On this occasion he only saw Florence and Siena, and returned after a fortnight. Burne-Jones, with whom he went out, and who himself made a more prolonged stay, found him a rather exacting companion, and a little determined to make the worst of things. The interior of the Duomo at Florence depressed him with its chilly bareness: San Miniato was unfortunately in the death-agonies of a thorough restoration; and even the more unspoiled Siena failed to excite him. Indeed it was from the natural beauty of Italy, both now and on later visits, that he drew far more pleasure than from its art. The descent to Turin from the Mont Cenis "on the most beautiful of all evenings, going, still between snow-capped mountains, through a country like a garden, green grass and feathery poplars and abundance of pink-blossomed leafless peach and almond trees," roused him to real enthusiasm, as did also the passage of the Apennines between Bologna and Pistoja. In Florence, the cloisters of Santa Maria Novella were what he found most to his mind; at Siena, even the wonderful cathedral library, all as bright as a painted book, could not please him because he wanted it to have been painted by some

one at least a century before Pinturicchio. The exterior of the Duomo of Florence he did indeed afterwards, a little grudgingly, admit to be the finest exterior of any building in the world.

Of the second journey to Iceland, which took place this summer, there is no need to give any detailed chronicle. Faulkner was again his companion. On board the mail steamer they found among their fellow-passengers that fine scholar and archæologist, John Henry Middleton. The acquaintance then formed was the beginning of a long friendship. As regards mediæval art of all kinds, Middleton, with a more contracted imagination, had a knowledge equal to Morris's own: in Greek and Persian art it was even greater, and when Morris later took up the manufacture of carpets and woven stuffs as part of his business, he found much help in Middleton's great knowledge of Oriental textiles. The article on Mural Decoration jointly written by them for the "Encyclopædia Britannica," ten years afterwards, is one surviving record of a long association in taste and sympathies.

The party started early in July and were away for a little over two months, sailing and returning, as in 1871, by the "Diana." Their journey through the interior was, however, longer and more adventurous than on their first visit. After a preliminary excursion of ten days to the more or less familiar ground in the south-west of the island, they started on the 1st of August to cross the great central wilderness in a north-easterly direction. From Dettifoss, the furthest point reached, they made their way across the northern mountains to the little seaport of Akureyri on Eyjafirth, and thence back over the wilderness by a more westerly route, reaching Reykjavik at the beginning of September. It was a journey which involved great physical

endurance—one day they were fifteen hours in the saddle—but no one was the worse for it in spite of much cold and rain. Except Lithend, no place famous in a Saga was visited, though from a northern mountain they saw Drángey, Grettir's island, lying below them down the long reach of Skagafirth. But the land itself, apart from the particular associations of places, had grown in his mind into a strange fascination. Even more now than two years before, the touch of Iceland was something that stirred him with an almost sacramental solemnity. "The journey," he writes of it after his return, "has deepened the impression I had of Iceland and increased my love for it. The glorious simplicity of the terrible and tragic, but beautiful land, with its well-remembered stories of brave men, killed all querulous feeling in me, and has made all the dear faces of wife and children and love and friends dearer than ever to me. I feel as if a definite space of my life had passed away now I have seen Iceland for the last time: as I looked up at Charles' Wain to-night, all my travel there seemed to come back on me, made solemn and elevated, in one moment, till my heart swelled with the wonder of it: surely I have gained a great deal, and it was no idle whim that drew me there, but a true instinct for what I needed."

In a lighter vein, but yet with a touch, at the close, of the same feeling of awe and breathlessness, he writes to Mrs. Baldwin on the 14th of September:

"Dear Louie,

"I came back safe and well last Friday, and I am sorry to say without the pony for your little lad: this was not laziness on my part, but was because I found the price of ponies gone up so much since I was last there that they are quite as dear there (for what

they are) as in England: I mean that a pony of any character, and by no means first-rate, will cost from £8 to £10 there, and as it would cost £8 or so more to get it to Wilden, the money, say £17, seemed enough to buy a better beast than I could be reasonably sure of bringing you: add to this that they will probably be cheaper there next year, and that a letter from me to one or other of my friends there would be enough to get an average specimen at the current price there if you still wish it.

"The old lady (age seventy-seven) turned out to be an ungrateful and stupid old creature as ever came out of Somersetshire (her native den). Yet one may be grateful to her for the following scene.

"On the strand at Reykjavik a row of general shops fronting the sea, Mr. Tomsen's shop in the foreground.

"Enter 1st, the Lieutenant of the 'Diana,' his hands in his waistcoat pockets, and he whistling 'See the conquering Hero Comes' to keep up his spirit. 2nd, two sailors from the 'Diana' carrying the old lady's bandbox and bundle. 3rd, the skipper of the 'Diana,' arm in arm with the OLD LADY. (Costume of her: a drawn grey silk bonnet, a little white shawl, a purple chintz scanty gown beautifully flowered, white stockings, and shoes with 'sandals.') Captain a fat, red-faced, intensely good-natured old naval officer. 4th, the whole of the male population of Reykjavik who can spare time from doing nothing, looking anxious as to whether they will all be able to get into Mr. Tomsen's shop.

"Old Lady to Lieutenant as they come on to Mr. Tomsen's doorstep, who stands there (little, polite, red-haired man) looking anxious as to how many of No. 4 he can keep out of his shop:

"'Mr. Lieutenant' (says she, taking about 4*d.* in small Danish money out of her pocket), 'will you take this?'

"Lieutenant. 'Thank you kindly; what am I to do with it?'

"O. L. 'Please to give it to the crew.'

"L. 'What will they do with it?'

"O. L. 'I do not wish them to drink too much.'

"L. 'Shall they drink coffee with it?'

"O. L. 'O yes, Mr. Lieutenant, that would be very nice.'

"L. grins and pockets the 4*d.* sterling, and the whole of 1, 2, and 3 disappear into Mr. Tomsen's shop, who manages to shut out No. 4, who takes its hands out of its pockets to take snuff and then settles itself to waiting till 1, 2, and 3 come out again.

"This is literal truth: also that the old lady wanted to be Guy Fawkesed about Iceland in a chair: also that she teased Mrs. Magnússon to buy her a lamb that she might cook it herself in her own private room, and scolded her heartily because she couldn't get her one at once: also that she slept on board ship with nothing over her but a sheet, though the thermometer was nearly at freezing point: also that she would hardly pay for anything, and (till the lamb came) was like to die of starvation (she told us she had £1,000 a year) if some one hadn't given her some plovers.

"I hear she went back by the return trip of the 'Diana' and, the weather being rough, was not much seen upon deck on the voyage: I still think she was the flying Dutchwoman. And now she is out of the story.

"We had a very successful journey, did all we meant to do, and had fine weather on the whole: a great comfort, as wet weather makes daily riding little more

than something to endure while it lasts, however amusing it may be to look back on, when it is well over. One day we rode through what we thought was a dust-storm mixed with drizzle, till a farmer told us that there must have been some eruption of the fire-mountains, as there was no sand thereabout, and that this was fine ashes. Skaptar Jokul has been very unquiet for years now, and the eruption in January last was a much more tremendous affair than one would have judged by the slight notice of it in our papers. One priest told me that they saw it for about a fortnight, gushes of fire ten times or so an hour, so that the long nights were quite light with it, and the short days all dark with the smoke. No one knows where the crater was among the unreachable ice of the great Jokul: the big river of Skeidara was nearly dried up by it for the time.

"Our guides were very pleasant, friendly fellows, as innocent of the great world as babies, and, apart from their daily labour, living almost entirely in the glorious past days of Iceland. One of them, Haldor by name, was born at Lithend, where Gunnar lived and died. I suppose I shall never see them again, and the days of these two journeys there have grown inexpressibly solemn to me.

"Please give my kindest remembrances to Baldwin, and believe me,

"Yours affectionately,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

Icelandic literature in one form or another still filled the first place in his mind. The notion of re-writing the epic of the Volsungs in English verse, though it was not begun till a good deal later, was already much in his thoughts, and he went on translating

the smaller Sagas and executing beautifully written copies of his translations. The illuminated manuscript of the Frithiof Saga, in the possession of Mr. Fairfax Murray, and that of the three Sagas of "Hen Thorir," "The Banded Men," and "Howard the Halt," given by Morris to Mrs. Burne-Jones, both belong to this period. The decoration of the former was never completed, but both are works of remarkable delicacy and beauty.

Even the transfusion of modern sentiment into an ancient story, as had been done with the Arthurian cycle by Tennyson, was a thing that Morris instinctively disliked. But the epic of the North was a thing that lay still nearer his heart; and what he thought a false or inadequate treatment of these great legends roused him into an agony of anger. On the 12th of November, 1873, he wrote from Queen Square to Mr. Forman, who had sent him a copy of his brother's translation of Wagner's libretto for "Die Walküre":

"Many thanks for your letter and the translation of Wagner: I have not had time to read it yet: nor to say the truth am I much interested in anything Wagner does, as his theories on musical matters seem to me as an artist and non-musical man perfectly abhominable: besides I look upon it as nothing short of desecration to bring such a tremendous and world-wide subject under the gaslights of an opera: the most rococo and degraded of all forms of art—the idea of a sandy-haired German tenor tweedledeeing over the unspeakable woes of Sigurd, which even the simplest words are not typical enough to express! Excuse my heat: but I wish to see Wagner uprooted, however clever he may be, and I don't doubt he is: but he is anti-artistic, don't doubt it."

The art of Wagner, indeed, with its lack of reticence, its idealized appeal to the senses, its highly coloured

and heavily charged rhetoric, was quite alien from all Morris's sympathies. Though, as he says in this letter, he was a non-musical man, the older music, the church music of the Middle Ages and that of the great English and Italian masters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, appealed to him very deeply. Music was a thing that, on the whole, he put away from him as not belonging to his work; but from the early days of his singing plain-song at Oxford till, in the weakness of his last illness, he broke to tears over a few snatches of virginal-music, it was from no want of sensitiveness—rather perhaps the reverse—that he would not admit it into his life.

He was now preparing the volume of translations, new and older, from the Icelandic, which, for some forgotten reason, was not published till 1875. Of its contents he writes again to Mr. Forman, on the 8th of December:

"I would have answered your letter before (many thanks for it) but I had not quite made up my mind about the Stories in my translation book. It stands thus now as I intended at first: the Story of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue, printed in the Fortnightly some years back; the Story of Frithiof the Bold, printed before in the Dark Blue; the story of Viglund the Fair, never before printed: these 'three Northern Love Stories' will give the name to the book, but to thicken it out I add three more short tales; Hroi the Fool, Hogni and Hedin, and Thorstein Staff-smitten; the first of these three a pretty edition of a 'sharper' story and the same as a tale in the Arabian Nights. The second a terrible story; a very well told, but late version of a dark and strange legend of remote times. The third simple, and not without generosity, smelling strong of the soil of Iceland, like the Gunnlaug."

He also worked a good deal at drawing from the model, "for my soul's sake chiefly," he quaintly said, "for little hope can I have ever to do anything serious in the thing." "I never," he says on the same occasion, "had the painter's memory which makes it easy to put down on paper what you think you see, nor indeed can I see any scene with a frame, as it were, round it, though in my own way I can realize things visibly enough to myself. But it seems I must needs try to make myself unhappy with doing what I find difficult, or impossible."

This unhappiness is not strange to the artistic temperament. But his practice in drawing now was not useless to him: and its effects may be seen, not indeed in any marked proficiency in drawing the human figure, but in a greater breadth and decisiveness of design in his decoration: a matter of no small importance when the designing of patterns for chintzes and woven tapestries became, as it did soon afterwards, one of his chief occupations. "I can't say that I get on with my drawing," he writes nearly a year afterwards; "but then I never expected I should: so I keep it up, dreading the model day like I used to dread Sunday when I was a little chap." At present, however, what he called the mood of idleness (his idleness was more productive than most men's work) was rather strong on him. "It is wet and wild weather," he writes one day during that winter, "but somehow I don't dislike it, and there is something touching about the real world bursting into London with these gales: it makes me feel lazy in the mornings though, and I feel as if I should like to sit in my pretty room at Turnham Green reading some hitherto unprinted Dumas, say about as good as the Three Musketeers." Another letter of a few months later shows very clearly all the strange thoughts that

were revolving in his mind. He was now forty: and at this middle point of life the spreading and interlacing ways of the future rolled out before him, dark and entangled indeed, but showing clearer and clearer beyond them some goal to which they all tended.

"26, Queen Square,
"March 26, 1874.

"My dear Louie,

"Many thanks for your kind and friendly letter: it was very nice of you to remember my birthday, which was solemnized by my staying at home all day and looking very hard at illuminations, now my chief joy. Yesterday, however, was May's birthday, mine was on Tuesday, on which sad occasion I was forty. Yet in spite of that round number I don't feel any older than I did in that ancient time of the sunflowers. I very much long to have a spell of the country this spring, but I suppose I hardly shall. I have so many things to do in London. Monday was a day here to set one longing to get away: as warm as June: yet the air heavy as often is in England: though town looks rather shocking on such days, and then instead of the sweet scents one gets an extra smell of dirt. Surely if people lived five hundred years instead of threescore and ten they would find some better way of living than in such a sordid loathsome place, but now it seems to be nobody's business to try to better things —isn't mine, you see, in spite of all my grumbling— but look, suppose people lived in little communities among gardens and green fields, so that you could be in the country in five minutes' walk, and had few wants, almost no furniture for instance, and no servants, and studied the (difficult) arts of enjoying life, and finding out what they really wanted: then I think one might

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hope civilization had really begun. But as it is, the best thing one can wish for this country at least is, meseems, some great and tragical circumstances, so that if they cannot have pleasant life, which is what one means by civilization, they may at least have a history and something to think of—all of which won't happen in our time. Sad grumbling—but do you know, I have got to go to a wedding next Tuesday: and it enrages me to think that I lack courage to say, I don't care for either of you, and you neither of you care for me, and I won't waste a day out of my precious life in grinning a company grin at you two.

"And so good-bye again, with many thanks.

"Yours affectionately,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

Yet his daily work went on with seemingly unabated energy. He kept writing again and again to Fairfax Murray at Rome for supplies of the fine Roman vellum for illumination. The vellum manuscript of the Odes of Horace was begun in March, 1874: about the same time he was planning another, of his own "Cupid and Psyche," with pictures from the designs which Burne-Jones had, five years before, made for the original scheme of the illustrated "Earthly Paradise." The Virgil was begun towards the end of the year, when he had at last obtained a sufficient supply of vellum of the larger size required for a folio.

Meanwhile the dye-house at Queen Square was occupying more and more of his attention. It had long been plain to him that the art of dyeing, fallen into a deplorable condition since the introduction of the anilines, lay at the foundation of the production of all coloured stuffs, whether printed, woven, or embroidered. A profound study which he made this year of all that

could be gathered from books on the subject, supplemented by continual experiments in his own vats, left him still unsatisfied; and in the following year he resolved to learn the art practically and thoroughly among the Staffordshire dye-works. This was the beginning of a fresh period in his life of renewed and strenuous activity. Just at present, however, he allowed himself more holiday-making than usual, often spending whole days fishing, and, besides his stays at Kelmscott, going with his family to Belgium in July, and to Mr. and Mrs. George Howard's at Naworth in August. On the 24th of July he wrote to his mother from Bruges:

"We have had but little railway travelling, only from Calais to Tournay, and from Tournay to Ghent: we found it so terribly hot on the railway that we quite gave up the idea of moving much, and so hired an omnibus at Ghent to take us here last Tuesday by road, and a very pleasant drive we had on a beautiful day, with a shower or two to lay the dust, through the ripe wheat and rye. I find Bruges scarcely changed at all; it is really a beautiful place, so clean and quiet too." A child of the party remembers that long sunshiny drive, and the halt for dinner at Eecloo, where, French and English being alike useless, Morris made a desperate effort at making himself understood by haranguing the amazed inn-keeper in Icelandic.

The visit to Naworth, on which he was accompanied by Burne-Jones, had the additional pleasure of a meeting with Dixon and a renewal of the affection and enthusiasm of Oxford days. "I saw Ted and Morris," Canon Dixon wrote to Price, "at the abode of splendour last week—slept there, and we were most jolly. Ned is in poor health I grieve to find, and a little quieter in manner, otherwise unaltered: Topsy genial,

gentle, delightful; both full of affection: it was a most happy meeting."

"I would like you to understand," Morris wrote to Mrs. Howard after his visit to Naworth, "as well as my clumsy letter-writing will let you, how very happy I was these few days in the north. I hope you will let me come again some time: and that then you will think me less arrogant on the—what shall I say?—Wesleyan-tradesman-unsympathetic-with-art subjects than you seemed to think me the other day: though indeed I don't accuse myself of it either: but I think to shut one's eyes to ugliness and vulgarity is wrong, even when they show themselves in people not unhuman. Do you know, when I see a poor devil drunk and brutal I always feel, quite apart from my æsthetical perceptions, a sort of shame, as if I myself had some hand in it. Neither do I grudge the triumph that the modern mind finds in having made the world (or a small corner of it) quieter and less violent, but I think that this blindness to beauty will draw down a kind of revenge one day: who knows? Years ago men's minds were full of art and the dignified shows of life, and they had but little time for justice and peace; and the vengeance on them was not increase of the violence they did not heed, but destruction of the art they heeded. So perhaps the gods are preparing troubles and terrors for the world (or our small corner of it) again, that it may once again become beautiful and dramatic withal: for I do not believe they will have it dull and ugly for ever. Meantime, what is good enough for them must content us: though sometimes I should like to know why the story of the earth gets so unworthy."

When the autumn holiday ended, worries awaited him which lasted through the winter and were not

finally adjusted—so far as any adjustment was possible—till the following spring. The formation of the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in 1861 has been already recounted: and it has sufficiently appeared how, as the years went on, the business became one in which capital, invention, and control were supplied practically by Morris alone. The business, in which he had embarked all his means, had become not only the daily work of his life, but the main source of his income; and it became necessary, now that he was a man in middle life with a growing family, to put things on a proper footing, and secure a provision in case of need for his children. On the other hand, his partners from their side saw not without uneasiness the extension of a business in whose liabilities—for the firm, formed before the passing of the Act of 1862, was not a limited company—they might at any moment find themselves seriously involved. On both sides, therefore, the dissolution and reconstitution of the firm was indicated as desirable or even necessary.

Under the original instrument, each of the seven partners had not only an equal voice in the management, but an equal interest in the assets of the firm. The profits had never, after the first year or two, been divided: partly because for years there were none to divide, partly because the legal rights of the partners had since then practically been allowed to lapse. But these legal claims now represented sums which involved intricate calculation, and which, in any case, were a formidable drain on the resources of the business, that is to say, on Morris's own fortune. It was plain that if they were insisted on, he would be placed in a position of great financial difficulty, if indeed he could continue to carry on the business at all. It will be remembered that the capital contributed by the part-

ners at the inception of the business, in respect of which these profits were now claimable, was £20 each, and it seems uncertain whether even this was in every case actually paid. In respect of the £120 purporting to have been embarked in the firm by the whole six, they had claims on the business for some seven or eight thousand pounds.

The story is not wholly a pleasant one, but it is proper that the truth should be told. Three of the partners, Burne-Jones, Faulkner, and Webb, refused to accept any consideration in respect of their claims as partners. The other three stood on the strict letter of their legal rights. The position they took up is given in the words of Madox Brown's solicitor, at a meeting—one of many during this winter—held on the 4th of November: "that as in the inception of the firm no member invested money, nor gave any time or labour without being paid at an agreed rate, the position of the several members ought to be considered as equal in respect to their claims on the assets of the firm; and further, that he, Mr. Brown, considers that the goodwill ought to be taken at three years' purchase and ought to be included in the said assets." In other words, the terms of partnership were such that each of the other partners, who had confessedly contributed nothing beyond a trifling sum towards capital, and who had been paid at the time for any assistance they gave towards the conduct of the business, was entitled to an equal share of the value of the business which had been built up by the energy, the labour, and the money of Morris alone.

Such, however, was their legal claim if they chose to stand upon it. The calculations and negotiations were long and intricate; it was not till March, 1875, that they were complete, and the dissolution of the

firm finally effected. On the 31st of March a circular was issued announcing that the firm had been dissolved and that the business would thenceforward be carried on under Morris's sole management and proprietorship. It was added that Burne-Jones and Webb, though no longer partners, would continue to help with designs for stained glass and furniture as before. The name of the business remained Morris & Co., a name which had already for some years practically superseded the longer title of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., under which it had been originally registered.

This transaction finally snapped the chain of attachment between Morris and Rossetti, which had, for other reasons, long been wearing thin. "They never throve together," says an intimate friend who survived them both, "after the first year or two." In the previous summer Rossetti had finally left Kelmscott and given up his share in the tenancy, to Morris's great relief. From the first almost he had been "unromantically discontented" with it: "he has all sorts of ways so unsympathetic with the sweet simple old place that I feel his presence there as a kind of slur on it." The action which, together with Madox Brown and Marshall, he now took over the dissolution of the partnership, caused Morris intense pain and mortification. With Madox Brown the breach did not remain unhealed; in his last years he was again on cordial relations with Morris, and this trouble was forgotten. But from this time forward Morris was no longer to be seen in Rossetti's house at Cheyne Walk, and the estrangement between the two powerful and self-centred personalities was final.

CHAPTER X

PERIOD OF DYEING: THE ÆNEIDS: SIGURD THE VOLSUNG

1875-1876

On the 25th of March, 1875, when the dissolution and reconstitution of the firm was just completed, Morris wrote to Mrs. Baldwin from Queen Square:

"It was very kind of you and I thank you very much for remembering me and my birthday: I have been a happy man with my friends, nor do I think, as far as my constant affection and good wishes are concerned, that I have done otherwise than to deserve the good hap. I am in the second half of my life now; which is like to be a busy time with me, I hope till the very end: a time not lacking content too, I fancy: I must needs call myself a happy man on the whole: and I do verily think I have gone over every possible misfortune that may happen to me in my own mind, and concluded that I can bear it if it should come.

"You would like to see my babies: they are such big girls—and so good; and even so handsome. Me! what a boy I feel still to have that responsibility on me, for in spite of my forty-one years I really don't feel a bit older than when Ned and I were living within sound of those tin-pot bells of St. Pancras: well-

remembered days when all adventure was ahead! Nay, in some things I have run through a time when I was older—but by no means wiser—than I am now, between those days and these.

"I shall be not very far from you next week: for I am going with Charley Faulkner, my inevitable travelling-fellow, to look at my fatherland. We are going to Shrewsbury, and thence to a college farm of his on the very head waters of Severn and Wye, where we are to have ponies and go over the hills and far away, only for about a week in all though: 'tis a short journey, but I think I shall love it. I think one sign of my increasing years is an increasing desire for travel, that I may see the wonders of the world before it is all gone from me: but I suppose I shall get less and less of that pleasure for some time to come: for I am very busy both with my bread and cheese work, and also with my pleasure work of books. I am publishing a little set of Icelandic stories very soon: also this summer a translation of the Æneids, which has been my great joy for months of late."

With such equanimity, even with such elation, it was that he entered on a fresh and crowded period of his life. Out of years of much restlessness and great emotional tension he had emerged, as a traveller might issue from some mountain gorge to a shining and fertile table-land lying broad under the sun. The brooding over death which had for years filled so much of his imagination seemed to fall quite away from him; and with it, as part of the same process, fell away the striving after things impossible. Before him now lay a life more equable in impulse and more rich in achievement: sweeter-tempered, and yet more full than ever of the tears of things, of the desire to do good and to contend against evil, and of un-

questioning pursuit of duty not without the courage of hope.

His "pleasure work of books" was still to issue in what he himself regarded as his highest achievement in literature, the epic of "Sigurd the Volsung." But during the year or eighteen months in which it was composed, his principal daily occupation, on what he calls the bread and cheese side of his activity, was the study and practice of dyeing and the cognate arts. This was necessary in order to lay a secure foundation for the production of textiles of all kinds; and it was not till he had mastered its processes that he was able to give his invention and his manual dexterity full scope, and produce what he wished, instead of being restricted to what he could make out of the bad or imperfect material supplied to him by the ordinary channels of commerce. From the very beginnings, the work of the firm had been hampered and often crippled by the difficulty of getting material, either raw or manufactured, which came near Morris's standard. "I remember," he said at the opening of the Manchester Art and Industrial Exhibition in 1882, "when I was first setting up house twenty-three years ago, and two or three other friends of mine were in the same plight, what a rummage there used to be for anything tolerable. On the whole I remember that we had to fall back on turkey-red cotton and dark blue serge." There was now indeed a noticeable improvement in some directions. Industrial art was no longer, as it had been in the fifties, absolutely debased. From centres of education at South Kensington and elsewhere there had been a slow and partial diffusion of knowledge, and ugliness or dishonesty, or both, did not now reign uncontrolled over the whole field of decorative production. Adulteration had been

checked: but the traditions of the great age of adulteration had become a fixed habit. On every side Morris was confronted by the double barrier of material that would not take good colour, and colour which in its own substance was uniformly bad. The coarse serges used in the early days of the firm as the ground for embroideries could only be had dyed in one of two ways, in bright anilines, or in colours which were quiet but muddy and without character. When it came to a question of carpets and woven hangings the difficulties were even greater. The dyes in use for carpet-work were both crude and fugitive. Those used in modern French silks he found almost as untrustworthy. "To-day we have bad accounts," is a doleful note of his about this time, "of another set of silk curtains of our selling: green this time, dyed at Lyons: as far as dyers are concerned I wish the days of Colbert back again: it was red last time, and Tours." "I am most deeply impressed," he writes at the end of 1875, "with the importance of our having all our dyes the soundest and best that can be, and am prepared to give up all that part of my business which depends on textiles if I fail in getting them so." All that could be done was to select the best and make the most of such combinations of them as were possible. "Mr Morris showed his usual sagacity," Mr. George Wardle notes, "in adopting this system of colour so long as the production of the colours themselves was beyond his control. His skill as a colourist was shown in combining colours which, separately, were of but very mediocre character. This system of colour, which may be called provisional, marks very distinctly what may be called the first period of the history of the firm, when Mr. Morris had not yet a dye-house. The peacock-blues, rusty reds, and

olive-greens of that period were not by any means his ideals, but the best he could get done. As soon as he was able to set up his own dye-house he turned at once to the frank full hues of the permanent dye-stuffs —indigo blue, madder red, weld yellow, etc.—and with these he produced the beautiful Hammersmith carpets and the Merton tapestries and chintzes."

It may be added that, like most great masters of colour, and following in this matter the best traditions of Oriental art, he used but few colours, and gained his effects by skilfully varied juxtaposition and contrast. In November, 1875, he wrote to Mr. Thomas Wardle, at Leek, giving a complete list of the steam-colours which he required for his own designs. They consist of two blues, one blue-green, two greens, two yellows, and one brown. "To these," he goes on, "one might add a black (if such a thing is to be got fast in steam-colours), and a shade or two of rust-yellows or buffs, which would present no difficulty, as they would be such as are ordinarily used. With the above colours I can carry out any design I should care for that did not need the madder colours, and setting indigo apart. As to the indigo, when we once get it, Prussian blues and greens will be things of the past with us."

Curiously enough, those provisional colours with their dull neutral tints were what clung to the minds of buyers and imitators long after Morris had been able to discard them entirely. The so-called peacock-blue, which he gave up at once when he had revived the use of the indigo vat, and the more appropriately named sage-green, which was one of his particular aversions, became obstinately associated with his name through ignorant imitation as much as by careless or malicious detraction. An incident which occurred in

the Oxford Street show-room a few years later gives an instance of what he had perpetually to bear from this invincible ignorance, and of how he sometimes found it past bearing. A person of importance called to discuss the carpeting of his new house. The best specimens of the Hammersmith carpets, then produced in a complete range of pure bright colour, were submitted to his inspection. He gave to them a somewhat impatient and wandering attention. "Are these all?" he asked. He was told yes. "But I thought," he went on, "your colours were subdued?" At this Morris, who had been gradually boiling up during the interview, boiled over. "If you want dirt," he broke out, "you can find that in the street." To the street the offended customer turned, and that was the end of his dealings with Morris & Company.

In the beautiful little essay "Of Dyeing as an Art" which Morris contributed to the catalogue of the second exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Society in 1889, he gives an account, at once lucid and fascinating, of the processes which he himself had to recover from abuse or disuse through laborious researches and experiments. "The art of dyeing," he says there in summing up the matter, "is a difficult one, needing for its practice a good craftsman, with plenty of experience. Matching a colour by means of it is an agreeable, but somewhat anxious game to play." The theory for this practice he sought out of old books, mainly French of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the ancient practice itself being almost extinct. Gerard's "Herbal," the old favourite of his boyhood, supplied useful information about certain disused vegetable dyes. He even went back to Pliny in the search after old methods. "I have sent you a copy of Philemon Holland's Pliny," he writes in August,

1875, to Mr. Thomas Wardle, "a most curious book in itself, and the translation a model of English: altogether one of the most amusing books in the world to my mind." Other old herbals which he acquired, both for their woodcuts and for the information they gave as to dyeing, were those of Matthiolus (Venice, 1590) and Fuchsius (Basle, 1543), the latter of which he notes as the best of all the herbals for refinement of drawing in the illustrations. "I have got a copy of Hellot (Paris, 1750)," he writes in June, 1876, "who is only about wool-dyeing: he is very minute about the management of the vats, and I think might be of some use in that quarter, as he wanted to do with his vats as we do, viz., make all the shades of blue to be used: he has an interesting chapter on kermes, which he praises as the best and fastest of colours. I can't help thinking that there might have been some foundation for the old idea that pastel and woad were faster than indigo: Hellot says that a vat of pastel only is better for the light colours, as it is hard to get them evenly dyed in a healthy indigo vat, and if they are dyed in an old and weak vat they are apt to be dirty." "We have been trying the 'Cuve d'Inde' here after Hellot," he writes a little later, "but cannot make much of it. I was at Kelmscott the other day, and betwixt the fishing, I cut a handful of poplar twigs and boiled them, and dyed a lock of wool a very good yellow: this would be useful if fast, for the wool was unmordanted. The fishing by the way was so-so, no perch but one, but the pike rather good: I got one of 5 lb. on the paternoster." He studied these treatises, "Le Teinturier Parfait" and others, with such ardour and imagination that he felt himself quite at home among the processes as soon as he got the necessary vats and becks set up. His first

dyeings were all done with his own hands, with no help beyond that of a boy who had till then been employed as errand-boy to the glass-painters' workshop. "So well had he prepared himself," Mr. George Wardle says, "that I do not think a single dyeing went wrong, nor was any appreciable quantity of yarn wasted." But in the little dye-house at Queen Square nothing could be done beyond what might be called laboratory experiments: to dye on the scale required for the firm's wants meant falling back on regular dye-works. For these he went to Mr. Thomas Wardle at Leek. He was the brother-in law of Morris's own manager at Queen Square, and was then already becoming known as one of the first practical authorities on dye-stuffs and the art of dyeing, chiefly as applied to silk and cotton. Morris found him full of interest in the revived methods which had long gone out of use, but which Mr. Wardle remembered as going on in his own boyhood, and which some of his older workmen had themselves practised. For about two years from the summer of 1875 Morris paid numerous and often protracted visits to Leek, where he and Wardle actually restored vegetable dyeing to the position of an important industry.

His first visit to Leek was made in July of this year. "I can't get back till this day week," he writes home when he had been there a few days. "I really can't come away without having come here for nothing; not that I haven't got on fairly well, but that I must see something more of results. The copper pots in the dye-houses, full of bright colours where they are dyeing silks, look rather exciting, but, alas! they are mostly aniline: our own establishment is very small, but I daresay will for some time to come turn out more goods by a great deal than we shall sell."

"The yarns dyed," Mr. George Wardle informs me, "were used for the pile carpets, for he began this business about the same time in Queen Square." The first of his carpet-looms was set up in the top story, and a carpet-knotter was got from Glasgow to teach the girls the method of working; she stayed a few weeks, by the end of which time the girls had learned all that she could teach. The first of his silk-looms, of which there will be more to say hereafter, was set up in Ormond Yard, a year or two later. It was not, however, till he was able to arrange a complete set of dye-shops and bleaching-grounds of his own at Merton Abbey that either carpet or silk weaving could be carried on by him except on a small and experimental scale.

What he worked at most assiduously at Leek was the lost art of indigo-dyeing. In itself this is one of the most delicate and uncertain vats in its due preparation and maturing. The experienced indigo-dyer is said to know when the fermentation has reached its proper point by an acute sense of smell, where no more scientific tests are found to answer. If the proper moment is not seized, the vat becomes useless. Even when the three days' preparation of the vat has been brought to a successful issue, the proper dipping of the yarn, so as to take the dye evenly, and not let any part of it touch the air for a moment, is a matter of the most delicate and accurate handling. "The setting of the blue-vat," Morris says in the essay on Dyeing, "is a ticklish job, and requires, I should say, more experience than any dyeing process." The decay of European indigo-dyeing, itself an art of late importation and not practised in Europe till the end of the sixteenth century, and its replacement by the so-called Prussian blue (ferro-cyanide of potassium, dyed on an iron basis) early in this century, and long

before the invention of the anilines, was mainly due to the greater ease and certainty of the latter process. This very uncertainty and delicacy gave it to Morris an additional touch of fascination beyond that of the madder or weld vats. About this time his hands were habitually and unwashably blue, and in no condition to do fine work.

"We have come over here," he writes from Lichfield during one of his fortnights at Leek, "to spend Sunday. Such a dull town is Lichfield, in a dull landscape: the church elaborate and complete, but so small as to be even petty: the old houses here seem to have been pulled down gradually by prosperous dulness, there are scarcely any much older than Johnson's time left; I daresay it was a sweet place enough while ago, when the old wood houses were standing. They have had some history even of late too; there is a stone in a house looking up into the Cathedral-close to mark where Lord Brooke fell, shot through the head from the big tower of the church just as he was beginning the siege of it (he was a Parliamentarian) in 1642—what a little time ago!

"I shall be glad enough to get back to the dye-house at Leek to-morrow. I daresay you will notice how bad my writing is; my hand is so shaky with doing journeyman's work the last few days: delightful work, hard for the body and easy for the mind. For a great heap of skein-wool has come for me and more is coming: and yesterday evening we set our blue-vat the last thing before coming here. I should have liked you to see the charm work on it: we dyed a lock of wool bright blue in it, and left the liquor a clear primrose colour, so all will be ready for dyeing to-morrow in it: though, by the way, if you are a dyer, you must call it *her*.

"Leek, Monday. I was interrupted there, and had no time for more at Lichfield: we drove from there this morning about eighteen miles to a station on the Dove, not a bad drive, through the last remains of Needwood Forest. I have been dyeing in *her* all the afternoon, and my hands are a woeful spectacle in consequence: *she* appears to be all that could be wished, but I must say I should like not to look such a beast, and not to feel as if I wanted pegs to keep my fingers one from the other. I lost my temper in the dye-house for the first time this afternoon: they had been very trying: but I wish I hadn't been such a fool; perhaps they will turn me out to-morrow morning, or put me in the blue-vat."

It was this absorption in dyeing and dye-stuffs which stopped his work as an illuminator. In the earlier months of this year that work had still been going busily on. On the 11th of March he had written to Fairfax Murray at Pisa:

"I inclose a P.O.O. for £5 for further disbursements on vellum: I would send more, but [for] the scraping everything together to pay my partners, who have come to some kind of agreement with me, if they don't cry off before the law business is settled; which drags on confoundedly, and to say the truth bothers me more than I like to confess. As to my illumination work, it don't get on just now, not because I shouldn't like to be at it, but because I am doing something else with Virgil, to wit, doing him into English verse: I have got toward the end of the 7th book and shall finish the whole thing and have it out by the beginning of June I hope: so you imagine I have not been quite idle. I shall keep you a big paper copy both of that and my new volume of Icelandic stories and of the new edition of 'Guenevere.'"

On the 27th of May he wrote again :

"The vellum came all safe to hand : many thanks for it. I noticed that the smaller size seemed very good : but had not much time to attend to it much, as I am very busy all sorts of ways. I have got my partnership business settled at last, and am sole lord and master here now, with never a Jorkins to refer unpleasant words to : however 'tis a great blessing, and has set me working hard to make things go. I have somewhat slacked from the Virgil translation, as I found it not possible to get it out this summer and easy enough to get it out by October : also I have begun one of the pictures for the Virgil : I make but a sorry hand of it at first, but shall go on with it till (at the worst) I am wholly discomfited. Whether I succeed or not in the end 'twill be a long job : so I am asking you if you would do some of them and what it would be worth your while to do them for. I shall be publishing the Icelandic stories in a week or two. After all I have no news for you ; I am up to the neck in turning out designs for papers, chintzes, and carpets, and trying to get the manufacturers to do them : I think we are doing some good things in that way."

Of the great folio manuscript of the Æneid which was now in progress, nearly six books were completed before it was laid aside from pressure of other work. Burne-Jones had drawn for it a series of his most exquisite designs. A good deal of the illumination was executed by Murray after his return to England. Morris himself never resumed it, though even some fifteen years later I remember seeing him turn over the sheets and hearing him talk of finishing it. Finally he sold it to Mr. Murray, in whose possession it now is. In beauty of handwriting and splendour of orna-

ment it takes far the first place among all his manuscripts.

The re-issue of the volume of poems of 1858 took place that April. He consented to it with a good deal of reluctance. Crude or unworkmanlike work, in poetry just as much as in any other craft, made him uneasy and even wretched: and he felt the immaturity of the workmanship in that volume more keenly than the severest of his critics. When he consented, at Mr. Ellis's repeated instances, to let the volume be republished, he insisted that it should be reprinted without the least alteration; he would not undertake any fresh responsibility for it by any excisions or amendments. Mr. Forman has noted a curious little fact: that the erratum slip pasted in the original issue had disappeared from the copy from which the new edition was set up, and that consequently the fidelity of the re-issue to the original extends even to the printers' errors which had been actually noted for correction before the book first appeared.

The volume of translations from the Icelandic appeared, under the title of "Three Northern Love Stories," a month or so later. Its contents were those of which he had given the list already quoted when he began to think of preparing them for publication eighteen months before; and it did not involve any further labour now. But at the beginning of November a new book appeared, which represented long-continued work of a high order, and challenged a wider and more informed criticism, his verse translation of the Æneid.

In departing from the sphere in which he was thoroughly at home and had recognized authority, to undertake a work which would be reckoned as one of scholarship in the narrower sense of that term, Morris

took, so to speak, his life in his own hand. "A translator of Virgil into English verse," as Lord Bowen observes in the brilliant little introduction to his own version, "finds the road along which he has undertaken to travel strewn with the bleaching bones of unfortunate pilgrims who have preceded him." And on all the surrounding rocks are perched the severest and most highly educated of critics: men who have learned, if not to do original work of any material human value, at least to take a legitimate pride in their own domain and either to resent or to despise the incursions of amateurs in scholarship. Trained scholars are only too apt, in the words of the same fine and large-minded scholar on another occasion, to be "jealously and suspiciously mounting guard over their own educational blessings, as if they were keeping an eye on their luggage at a crowded railway station." Morris himself was not, in the proper sense of the word, a trained scholar. He had only taken a pass degree at Oxford, and had passed practically on the amount of scholarship with which he went up to Exeter. Since then, while his reading in mediæval Latin had been immense, he had hardly touched the classical authors. Of all the classical authors, Virgil is the one who demands the greatest knowledge from any one who would really understand him; and it cannot be said that Morris brought to this task any adequate equipment.

Yet for his purposes the attempt was not only legitimate but successful. The earlier romanticists had decried the Æneid as an artificial epic (as though there were such things as natural epics); but their attack had recoiled on their own heads. By refusing to acknowledge the supremacy of Virgil in poetry, they had only thrown discredit on the soundness of their own canons and the truth of their own taste. In this translation

Morris did not only indicate what Virgil's beauty and value were to a more sane mediævalism. He did more; he vindicated the claim of the romantic school to a joint-ownership with the classicists in the poem which is not only the crowning achievement of classical Latin, but the fountain-head of romanticism in European literature. In the Æneid, as in other works of supreme genius, the reader imputes his own qualities, but this is because Virgil's own genius is compounded of many subtly woven and far-ranging elements. For what in Virgil is most Virgilian we may go in vain to any translation: for some of his qualities, his stateliness, his rolling pomp of language, his intricate modulation, we need not go to this one: yet it sensibly, and often with great felicity, embodies certain other qualities which more fully trained translators have missed: his sweetness, his romantic melancholy, and something at least of his delicate and haunting music.

Morris took all the pains he could, short of writing a preface, which was a thing he scorned to do, to emphasize the fact that he approached Virgil from this romantic or mediæval side. The very title of "The Æneids" which he gave to the volume was a plain notice of the aim and end of his work. Still, it need not cause surprise that this view of the Æneid, though it represents a substantial element, not only of its true original value, but of that which has since accrued to it through the associations of many centuries, was only received with partial approval by an age more familiar, through habit and education, with the other side of Virgil's art.

Mr. Swinburne, writing to Morris on the 9th of November, 1875, a few days after the publication of "The Æneids," begged him to do a Homer, or at least an Odyssey. Just at that moment, however,

anything of the kind was far from the poet's mind. On the day that Swinburne's letter was written, he wrote himself to Mrs. Morris from Kelmscott:

"It began to rain again before I got to Lechlade, at first to my infinite disappointment: however, when I got here and had had my lunch, and, as it were, made myself free of the river by an insane attempt to fish, I began to feel very comfortable, and took out my work and looked at it. The floods are already very high, and as it is certainly going to rain for the next 24 hours, I expect to see something curious. I don't think I shall come back before Saturday, as I really hope to do a pile of work here. I am rather short of victuals, as the booby Judd (female) only got me 1 lb. of bacon instead of 3, as I ordered her: however, there will be enough, I daresay, till we can send into Lechlade: there is also one tin of kangaroo meat. My hands are still somewhat stiff with my work on the river—Lord! how cold it was—wind E. or thereabouts. I am obliged to write by candlelight though 'tis only 4 o'clock.

"Best love to my one daughter—wouldn't she have liked to have been out on the flooded river with me, the wind right in one's teeth and the eddies going like a Japanese tea-tray: I must say it was delightful: almost as good as Iceland on a small scale: please the pigs, I will have a sail on the floods to-morrow."

The birthday letter, which he never omitted to send to his mother, has in it this year a mention of another source of relief to him, the resignation of his Directorship of the Devon Great Consols Company.

"Dearest mother," he writes, "I send you my best love and many happy returns of the day: item I send you a flower-pot and saucer from some samples that they have just sent us from India, and which are still

curiosities, as I suppose there are not two more in England at present out of the India House Museum. I have just come from the D. G. C. meeting, and, I suppose, ended my business there, except for receiving my £100 which they were once again kind enough to vote us. Stanley will tell you all about the meeting. I am much better than I have been. I went down (or up) to Oxford for two days at Whitsuntide, and I am going there about the middle of June again to take my M.A. degree; which is perhaps rather a fad of mine; but I thought I might indulge it for once."

The Leek dye-vats were busily at work all that winter and into the following spring. On Sunday, the 26th of March, 1876, he wrote from there to Mrs. Burne-Jones:

"My days are crowded with work; not only telling unmoveable Lancashire what to do, but even working in sabots and blouse in the dye-house myself—you know I like that. Your kind hope for my poem was vain I am sorry to say: T. Wardle rather insisted on my going out with him, so I yielded, not very loth, as I thought a country walk would not be amiss: so we took train to a station and then walked, first by a gim-crack palace of Pugin's, Alton Towers to wit, then to a village where your friend the novel-writer came from (called Ellaston, I rather think), then to a village church, Norbury, with a strange very rich chancel to it, out of place in that queer way that things are in England, then up the valley of the Dove to Ashbourne, which I think Dr. Johnson had something to do with: a dull walk that last, I scarcely know why, but Ashbourne church very fine and rich; and so home.

"Some time this week I am going to Nottingham to see the hot vat in operation for flock wool-dyeing: when I was a very youngster, my father's mother,

then grown doting, used to promise me a journey to Nottingham, her home, if I were a *very* good boy.

"Meantime I trust I am taking in dyeing at every pore (otherwise than by the skin of my hands, which is certain). I have found out and practised the art of weld-dyeing, the ancientest of yellow dyes, and the fastest. We have set a blue vat for cotton, which I hope will turn out all right to-morrow morning: it is nine feet deep, and holds 1,000 gallons: it would be a week's talk to tell you all the anxieties and possibilities connected with this indigo subject, but you must at least imagine that all this is going on on very nearly the same conditions as those of the shepherd boy that made a watch all by himself."

The fortunes of the indigo vat are continued in a letter written two days later to Mrs. Coronio.

"Leek,
"March 28th.

"My dear Aglaia,

"I am at last able to write to you, and thank you for your letter: I have a huge deal to do in a very limited time, for I am trying to learn all I can about dyeing, even the handiwork of it, which is simple enough, but, like many other simple things, contains matters in it that one would not think of unless one were told. Besides my business of seeing to the cotton-printing, I am working in Mr. Wardle's dye-house in sabots and blouse pretty much all day long: I am dyeing yellows and reds: the yellows are very easy to get, and so are a lot of shades of salmon and flesh-colour and buff and orange; my chief difficulty is in getting a deep blood red, but I hope to succeed before I come away: I have not got the proper indigo vat for wool, but I can dye blues in the

cotton vat and get lovely greens with that and the bright yellow that weld gives.

"This morning I assisted at the dyeing of 20 lbs. of silk (for our damask) in the blue vat; it was very exciting, as the thing is quite unused now, and we ran a good chance of spoiling the silk. There were four dyers and Mr. Wardle at work, and myself as dyers' mate: the men were encouraged with beer and to it they went, and pretty it was to see the silk coming green out of the vat and gradually turning blue: we succeeded very well as far as we can tell at present; the oldest of the workmen, an old fellow of seventy, remembers silk being dyed so, long ago. The vat, you must know, is a formidable-looking thing, 9 ft. deep and about 6 ft. square: and is sunk into the earth right up to the top. To-morrow I am going to Nottingham to see wool dyed blue in the woad vat, as it is called; on Friday Mr. Wardle is going to dye 80 lbs. more silk for us, and I am going to dye about 20 lbs. of wool in madder for my deep red. With all this I shall be very glad indeed to be home again, as you may well imagine.

"I am glad you liked my work at the show, though I don't think it was much to make a row about; the silk piece I thought was the best. Mrs. Lewes came from this country-side, by the way: I went through the village where she lived, on Sunday: Ellaston, I think, it was called; a dull village; I seem to see a good few people about like the 'Aunts' in the 'Mill on the Floss.'

"I hope you are well.

"I am your affectionate

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

The following words were written also from Leek, during this visit, to a friend who was passing through

one of those darknesses in which the whole substance of life seems now and then to crumble away under our hands. They contain, in brief words that are free from either doubt or arrogance, the confession of his own faith: a matter as to which he was reserved of speech, and only revealed himself under the stress of some unusual emotion.

"Wherein you are spiritless, I wish with all my heart that I could help you or amend it, for it is most true that it grieves me; but also, I must confess it, most true that I am living my own life in spite of it, or in spite of anything grievous that may happen in the world. Sometimes I wonder so much at all this, that I wish even that I were once more in some trouble of my own, and think of myself that I am really grown callous: but I am sure that though I have many hopes and pleasures, or at least strong ones, and that though my life is dear to me, so much as I seem to have to do, I would give them away, hopes and pleasures, one by one or all together, and my life at last, for you, for my friendship, for my honour, for the world. If it seems boasting I do not mean it; but rather that I claim, so to say it, not to be separated from those that are heavy-hearted only because I am well in health and full of pleasant work and eager about it, and not oppressed by desires so as not to be able to take interest in it all. I wish I could say something that would serve you, beyond what you know very well, that I love you and long to help you: and indeed I entreat you (however trite the words may be) to think that life is not empty nor made for nothing, and that the parts of it fit one into another in some way; and that the world goes on, beautiful and strange and dreadful and worshipful."

So much as I seem to have to do!—the words were

in one form or another habitually on his lips all through his life: yet he never used them complainingly or grudgingly, but rather as one who felt the world perpetual in its interest and variety, and to whom no length of days could be long enough to exhaust either the work that there was for him to do or his own active pleasure in doing it. But to one of his own heroes, whether Greek or Northern, the wish to be once more in some trouble of his own, however lightly uttered, might have seemed a wilful provocation of fate, and only too certain to draw down its own fulfilment. Within the next few months trouble of his own came to him against which he could have made no provision. The form that trouble took was one which can only be briefly touched upon, but which had too profound an effect upon his whole life to be entirely passed over. His elder daughter, now a girl of fifteen, exceptionally bright, clever, and diligent, was already her father's chosen companion, and gave promise of a brilliant future. In the summer of 1876 her health broke completely down. From this distress his mind was never henceforth free. To all who had the privilege of a close knowledge, his tenderness and unceasing thought and care for her were the most touchingly beautiful element in his nature; but his anxiety over her was literally continuous for the remainder of his life.

On the 18th of July he wrote to Mrs. Morris, who was at Deal with the two children:

"I am so glad to hear that things go well so far: though of course I cannot help being anxious. Yes, I got the dear thing's letters, and answered them on Sunday (else I should have written to you), and very pretty letters they were. The news from here is little or none; *e.g.*, that I broke the strings of the Venetian blind in my room last night; that no water came into

the cistern on Sunday, and very little yesterday, and so on. Item, I was *not* the man that threw the medicine bottles at the dog last Saturday, and was fined a shilling for that righteous indignation.

"I can't help thinking that you have not been so hot as we have been these last days; though last night and to-day it has been cooler: so much so, that, calling on Kate yesterday evening, I found her refusing to go out with her mother because the wind was so cold: nay, she durst not go near the window, for she said that the bitter north wind cut her in half. As for me, that the grumbling circle may be complete, I am longing for that tail of the glacier in Thorsmark, or our camp in the wilderness at Eyvindarkofarver under the snow mountains: in fact, though I don't feel unwell (and therefore ought to hold my noise, as you very truly say), I am depressed and languid (say lazy) and don't care for my work, at any rate not the bread and cheese part of it: though for want of finding any amusement in books on Saturday and Sunday I did manage to screw out my tale of verses, to the tune of some 250 I think. By the way the Athenæum has been very civil to me about that scrap of poem I published in it the other day, though it was not worth publishing either, and sent me £20: it seems, such is the world's injustice and stupidity, that it was a success—never mind; I shall pay for it when my new poem comes out. I cannot tell you how pleased I am to hear that you think so well of Jenny: you don't say much about May: I suppose it can't fail to do her good: I think it would be a great pity to hurry them away if the place really seems to suit them, and if you can hold out there: I will give you as much of my company as work will let me: to-day week or to-morrow week I hope to come down, and shall stay

three days or so at any rate: I am looking forward to it very much. Take care of yourself, my dear, and tell me of anything you want: I think we had better spend that £20 in carriages at Deal?"

In spite of the engrossing occupation of the dyeing work and the unsettlement caused by his daughter's illness, the composition of "Sigurd the Volsung" had been advancing swiftly throughout the year. It was published at the end of November. What reception he anticipated for it may be gathered from the letter just quoted: and, in fact, for one reason or another, it was but languidly received. In his own judgment, it stood apart from the rest of his poetry, less because it showed any higher perfection in craftsmanship than because the subject was the story which he counted the first in the world, and because he was convinced that he had treated this story with a fidelity and a largeness of manner for which he could answer to his own conscience. The Volsunga Saga had for long seemed to him almost too great a story to be re-told, and too perfectly set forth in the noble Icelandic prose of the twelfth century to gain, or not to lose, from fresh handling. "This is the Great Story of the North," he had written six years before, "which should be to all our race what the Tale of Troy was to the Greeks: to all our race first, and afterwards, when the change of the world has made our race nothing more than a name of what has been, a story too, then should it be to those that come after us no less than the Tale of Troy has been to us." When at last he resolved to attempt the re-telling, he was bound by an almost impossible loyalty to his original. For the purposes of an epic it is almost obvious that the story begins far too early, and has epic unity only from the point at which Sigurd's own conscious life begins. The

Icelandic Saga is a chronicle which the genius of its tellers has almost against their will converted into an epic, but which retains much history that the limits of an epic reject. The whole of the life of Sigmund, which fills the first of the four books of the poem, is a separate story, containing a strange and savagely magnificent epic of its own, centring round the three colossal figures of Sigmund and Signy and their son Sinfiotli. No art or skill can make this earlier epic either subordinate to, or coherent with, the epic of the Afterborn; of Sigurd, only born after Sigmund's death, and of those with whose lives an inextricable fate enwound his. It is as though the epic of Troy opened with a recital of the epic of Thebes. Both in the Greek and in the Scandinavian cycle the story that comes earlier in the history is also earlier in its structure; more primitive, more colossal, less fully human. The cannibal savagery of Tydeus, the incest of Œdipus and Jocasta, the living burial of Antigone, rouse a greater horror than anything in the Trojan story, but it is not one based on the same universal human sympathy. And so it is with the story of Sigmund: the wolf-change of the Volsung, the cruel purposeless slaughter of Signy's children, the strangely inhuman life and death of the son of that awful brother and sister, are tragic indeed, but with such tragedy as belongs to the dim and monstrous reign of the older gods. With what skill Morris effects the transition, with what genius he drives the story through into its destined channel, is hardly to the purpose: the fact remains that what he tried to do was wrong, and that no skill can set it wholly right. Indeed when he came to the end of the story he was obliged to confess as much. The Volsunga Saga does not end with the episode of Gudrun casting herself into

the sea while the palace of Atli roared up in flame. Here Morris stops. But the Saga-writer goes pitilessly on: and after it has lost Gudrun as well as Brynhild the story relapses into something of its earlier horror and savagery. The death of Swanhild, her head tied in a bag because "when she opened her eyes wide, then the horses durst not trample her," is followed by the dismal ending of Gudrun's sons: nor will the Saga-writer stay his hand till he can set down the destruction of that whole kin, root and stem. To pursue the Saga to its end, in a fifth book, Morris no doubt felt to be impossible. To continue after the main interest is gone would be a grave fault of art. But it is a fault of art scarcely less grave to anticipate that interest, and excite it at the opening of the tale in disparate matter, and, as it were, on a false issue.

Yet the main story, as it is told in the other three books of the poem, is undoubtedly unsurpassed in the world for epic grandeur and tragic tension; and in his version, the most Homeric poem which has been written since Homer, Morris felt that he had given it no inadequate treatment. It is a story at once deeper-searching into human nature and more universal in its view of human life than that of either the Iliad or the Odyssey. To cool reflection it must be plain that the story of the Iliad is in itself one of the second order: one that had to be filled up with episodes of extraneous interest, and is raised to its rank, as, on the whole, the greatest poetical achievement of mankind, only by the prodigious genius of its final author. The story of the Odyssey, as it is summed up in the well-known words of Aristotle—"a certain man being in foreign lands for many years, and watched jealously by Poseidon, and alone, and things at home being likewise in such case that his substance

was spent by suitors and plots laid against his son, arrives after a tempestuous voyage, and discovering himself to certain persons, attacks his enemies and destroys them, but is saved himself"—is a Saga of the simplest order without any dramatic motive of great depth or complexity, but told with incomparable skill, and brought into a wider atmosphere by the Phæacian romance and the Arabian tales of miraculous adventure incorporated with the original story. Had the luminous intelligence to which we owe the Iliad and Odyssey been applied to a story in itself so tremendous as that of Sigurd, Brynhild, and Gudrun, it is difficult to imagine to what unscaled heights the epic might have risen. As it is, for want of that Greek intelligence, the story is not fully humanized. Grimhild's witch-drink, for instance, is not, like the cup of Circe, the mere embroidery of a fairy-tale: it is essential to the tragedy, and is a type of that savage or inhuman element which lingered through the literature as well as the life of the North.

To Morris's mind, at any rate, the philosophy or religion that lived under these half-humanized legends was something quite real and vital: and it substantially represented his own guiding belief. In a summarized statement of the northern mythology which he wrote out about this time, he concludes with the following striking sentences:

"It may be that the world shall worsen, that men shall grow afraid to 'change their life,' that the world shall be weary itself, and sicken, and none but faint-hearts be left—who knows? So at any rate comes the end at last, and the Evil, bound for a while, is loose, and all nameless merciless horrors that on earth we figure by fire and earthquake and venom and ravin. So comes the great strife; and like the kings and heroes

that they have loved, here also must the Gods die, the Gods who made that strifeful imperfect earth, not blindly indeed, yet foredoomed. One by one they extinguish for ever some dread and misery that all this time has brooded over life, and one by one, their work accomplished, they die: till at last the great destruction breaks out over all things, and the old earth and heavens are gone, and then a new heavens and earth. What goes on there? Who shall say, of us who know only of rest and peace by toil and strife? And what shall be our share in it? Well, sometimes we must needs think that we shall live again: yet if that were not, would it not be enough that we helped to make this unnameable glory, and lived not altogether deedless? Think of the joy we have in praising great men, and how we turn their stories over and over, and fashion their lives for our joy: and this also we ourselves may give to the world.

"This seems to me pretty much the religion of the Northmen. I think one would be a happy man if one could hold it, in spite of the wild dreams and dreadful imaginings that hung about it here and there."

In this spirit it was that Morris approached the story of Sigurd. Nor need it be matter of surprise that the strength of the poem no less than its weaknesses, its unity of spirit and motive no less than the complexity of its scheme, made it pass over the heads of a public little accustomed to the strenuous task of embracing and taking in any work of great scope and organic structure. Whether or not it be true, as is often lightly said, that the age for epics is over, the time when "Sigurd" appeared was emphatically an age of the idyl, and unresponsive to the appeal of the larger poetic architecture. Morris himself never concealed his own opinion of the merits of the poem. To a petulant, but not wholly unjustified, criticism which

poem made on the dragon-transformation of Fafnir, as an element in the story which was not merely narrative, but why he made a reply which can scarcely be quoted here, but which no one who has heard it is ever likely to forget. But he did not let the rapid welcome which "Sigurd" met with weigh on his spirits. Two months after its publication he writes from Leek, where he was again busy among his dyevats and ordering three hundredweight of poplar-twigs for experiments in yellow dyeing (the colour they gave did not turn out sufficiently fast to vanity dye):

"My ill temper about the public was only a London mood and is quite passed now: and I think I have even forgotten what I myself have written about that most glorious of stories, and think about it all (and very often) as I did before I began my poem."

"I had been reading the Njala," this letter goes on, "in the original before I came here: it is better even than I remembered; the style most solemn (I assert now and then that a word too homely I think, which brings it down a little): all men children in it, as always in the best of the northern stories, so venerable to each other, and so venerated: and the unending good temper of Gunnar amidst his heroism, and the calm of Njal: and I don't know anything more consoling or grander in all literature (to use a beastly French word) than Gunnar's singing in his house under the moon and the drifting clouds: or do you remember the portents at Bergthorsknoll before the burning, and how Skarphedinn takes them? or Skarphedinn's death; or how Flosi pays the penalty for the Burning, never appealing against the due and equal justice, but defending himself and his folk stoutly against it at every step. What a glorious outcome of the worship of Courage these stories are."

His position as a poet was in any case secure among

those best qualified to judge; and popularity with any large mass of thoughtless opinion was not a thing he very much cared for. The element of aristocratic fastidiousness in his nature rather shrank from it, and it was not till later, when he became the exponent of an active creed, that he felt any of the discouragement that comes of appealing to averted ears. Sir Francis Doyle was now vacating the Oxford Professorship of Poetry, in which he had succeeded Matthew Arnold. Morris was at once thought of by his friends as (at all events if Mr. Swinburne were excepted) the most eminent of other living Oxford poets; and though his want of orthodoxy alike in politics and in religious belief made it certain that he could not be an unopposed candidate, inquiry seemed to justify them in thinking that he might be asked to stand with fair prospects of success. The offer was one which tempted him greatly. His love for Oxford, in spite of his hatred of the typical Oxonian, was very deep-seated, and the position was one which, without involving any serious labour, was both influential and distinguished. But finally he made up his mind against it.

"I am afraid," he wrote on the 16th of February, 1877, to Mr. Thursfield, who had approached him on the subject on behalf of the members of Convocation who were anxious that he should consent to stand, "you must think I have been a long while answering your letter; I beg you to excuse my apparent neglect on the grounds that I found it hard to make up my mind what was right to do. In the first place I thank you personally very much for moving in the matter, and I must say that nothing hardly would please me so much as such a recognition from my University, apart from considerations of fitness on my side: nor would laziness or the various heavy business on my

hands prevent me from coming forward if I thought I could be of any real use: neither would a contested election frighten me, though I don't like such things. It is therefore with the greatest regret that I find I must needs say 'no'; and this simply because I feel that I am not the man to fill the post: I suppose the lectures a Poetry Professor should give ought to be either the result of deep and wide scholarship in the matter, or else pieces of beautiful and ingenious rhetoric, such, for example, as our Slade Professor could give; and in both these things I should fail and do no credit either to the University or myself. It seems to me that the *practice* of any art rather narrows the artist in regard to the *theory* of it; and I think I come more than most men under this condemnation, so that though I have read a good deal and have a good memory, my knowledge is so limited and so ill-arranged that I can scarce call myself a man of letters: and moreover I have a peculiar inaptitude for expressing myself except in the one way that my gift lies. Also may I say without offence that I have a lurking doubt as to whether the Chair of Poetry is more than an ornamental one, and whether the Professor of a wholly incommunicable art is not rather in a false position: nevertheless I would like to see a good man filling it, and, if the critics will forgive me, somebody who is not only a critic. I ask your pardon for writing so much about myself, but your kindness has brought it on your head."

Shairp was elected without a contest to the professorship: and the chair was dignified by an occupant of unimpeachable orthodoxy, of a most kindly and courteous nature, and of some merit both as a critic and as a poet.

CHAPTER XI

THE SOCIETY FOR PROTECTION OF ANCIENT BUILDINGS: THE EASTERN QUESTION ASSOCIATION: PERIOD OF TEXTILES

1877-1878

ALMOST without knowing it, Morris was now beginning to take a part in public action and political life. From both he had hitherto, in common with the circle of artists to which he belonged, kept apart as from matters that did not concern him. As regards the arts of life, he had been content to labour in his own field, and trust to good work producing its influence, without any active attempt to inculcate first principles or to stem the tide of competition and industrialism by organized teaching. In politics, he was a passive, rather than an active Liberal; voting with his party, and even occasionally attending public meetings, but not a name known in the press or on the platform. In active civic duties, any more than in active political work, he had probably taken no share since his illness in 1864 had made him retire from his Volunteer corps. But this abstention was not natural to him, as it often is to artists and men of letters. His innate Socialism—if the word may for once be used in its natural sense

and not as expressing any doctrine—was, and had been from his earliest beginnings, the quality which, more than any other, penetrated and dominated all he did. In this year it forced itself out in two different channels, which would by ordinary people be distinguished from one another as belonging to the fields of art and politics, but which to Morris himself, to whom both art and politics, except in so far as they bore directly on life, were alike meaningless, only represented two distinct points at which the defence of life against barbarism could be carried on. One of these movements he originated, or at least put into active existence, by the formation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. The other he aided with all his power by work and money spent in the service of the Eastern Question Association. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings has had a long, a quiet, and not a useless life: and has, directly or indirectly, saved many remnants of the native art of England from destruction. The Eastern Question Association was formed to meet a passing political crisis and broke up when its object had ceased. But from Morris's work on the former grew the whole of his later activity as a lecturer and instructor in the principles of art, and as founder and leader of a guild of craftsmen who exist now as the permanent result of his influence. From his work on the latter was developed, by a process of which every step can be clearly traced, his conversion to a definite and dogmatic Socialism.

The destruction of ancient buildings which, throughout the whole of Morris's life, he had seen going on almost unchecked, whether from mere careless barbarism or under the more specious and ruinous pretext of restoration, had been a thing against which it seemed hopeless for any one to fight. It had hitherto been

attacked only in isolated instances, by individuals, without any clear statement of principle or any certainty of continuous action. It could only be combated with any hope of success through some permanent and organized body, to whose representations some attention would have to be paid, and who would have time and money to spend on their work. The formation of a society wholly devoted to this purpose seems first to have occurred to Morris's mind in the autumn of 1876, and in connexion with two definite instances of restoration which then came under his own eyes. One was that of Lichfield Cathedral, which he and Wardle had been visiting from Leek. The other was near Kelmscott. On the 4th of September, 1876, a party drove from Kelmscott to pay a visit of a few days to Cormell Price at Broadway. On the way, as usual, they stopped to bait in the pretty little town of Burford on the Windrush. The alterations going on in the beautiful parish church there roused his horror; and at Broadway Tower he drafted a letter urging the formation of a Society which might deal with such cases, and, if the destruction done by the restorers could not be stopped, might at all events make it clear that it was destruction and not preservation. But for some reason or other no immediate action was taken for several months after. At the beginning of March, 1877, an account of the proposed restoration of the splendid Abbey church at Tewkesbury roused him to take practical steps. Mr. F. G. Stephens had for some years been upholding the cause of ancient buildings in the Athenæum newspaper with much courage and persistency, singling out for special attack the wholesale operations carried out in so many cathedral and parochial churches by Sir Gilbert Scott. To the Athenæum Morris now turned for aid in realizing his

project. On the 5th of March he wrote to it as follows:

"My eye just now caught the word 'restoration' in the morning paper, and, on looking closer, I saw that this time it is nothing less than the Minster of Tewkesbury that is to be destroyed by Sir Gilbert Scott. Is it altogether too late to do something to save it,—it and whatever else of beautiful and historical is still left us on the sites of the ancient buildings we were once so famous for? Would it not be of some use once for all, and with the least delay possible, to set on foot an association for the purpose of watching over and protecting these relics, which, scanty as they are now become, are still wonderful treasures, all the more priceless in this age of the world, when the newly-invented study of living history is the chief joy of so many of our lives?

"Your paper has so steadily and courageously opposed itself to these acts of barbarism which the modern architect, parson, and squire call 'restoration,' that it would be waste of words to enlarge here on the ruin that has been wrought by their hands; but, for the saving of what is left, I think I may write a word of encouragement, and say that you by no means stand alone in the matter, and that there are many thoughtful people who would be glad to sacrifice time, money, and comfort in defence of those ancient monuments: besides, though I admit that the architects are, with very few exceptions, hopeless, because interest, habit, and ignorance bind them, and that the clergy are hopeless, because their order, habit, and an ignorance yet grosser, bind them; still there must be many people whose ignorance is accidental rather than inveterate, whose good sense could surely be touched if it were clearly put to them that they were destroying what

they, or, more surely still, their sons and sons' sons, would one day fervently long for, and which no wealth or energy could ever buy again for them.

"What I wish for, therefore, is that an association should be set on foot to keep a watch on old monuments, to protest against all 'restoration' that means more than keeping out wind and weather, and, by all means, literary and other, to awaken a feeling that our ancient buildings are not mere ecclesiastical toys, but sacred monuments of the nation's growth and hope."

The train caught fire. A fortnight after this letter appeared, the Athenæum announced that his proposal was likely to take effect, and within another fortnight the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings had been constituted and had held its first meeting, Morris acting as secretary. The eminent men in many walks of life who at once joined it were sufficient to protect it from either contempt or ridicule; and if it has not stayed destruction, it has at all events saved much that would otherwise have been lost, and has had an immense though quiet influence in raising the standard of morality on the subject of ancient buildings throughout England. Architects and owners alike now take a wholly new and wholly beneficial sense of their responsibility. The principles of the Society are given by Morris with unsurpassed lucidity and force in the statement issued by it on its foundation.

"Within the last fifty years a new interest, almost like another sense, has arisen in these ancient monuments of art; and they have become the subject of one of the most interesting of studies, and of an enthusiasm, religious, historical, artistic, which is one of the undoubted gains of our time; yet we think that if the present treatment of them be continued, our descendants will find them useless for study and chilling to

enthusiasm. We think that those last fifty years of knowledge and attention have done more for their destruction than all the foregoing centuries of revolution, violence, and contempt.

"For architecture, long decaying, died out, as a popular art at least, just as the knowledge of mediæval art was born. So that the civilized world of the nineteenth century has no style of its own amidst its wide knowledge of the styles of other centuries. From this lack and this gain arose in men's minds the strange idea of the Restoration of ancient buildings; and a strange and most fatal idea, which by its very name implies that it is possible to strip from a building this, that, and the other part of its history—of its life, that is—and then to stay the hand at some arbitrary point, and leave it still historical, living, and even as it once was.

"In early times this kind of forgery was impossible, because knowledge failed the builders, or perhaps because instinct held them back. If repairs were needed, if ambition or piety pricked on to change, that change was of necessity wrought in the unmistakable fashion of the time; a church of the eleventh century might be added to or altered in the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, or even the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; but every change, whatever history it destroyed, left history in the gap, and was alive with the spirit of the deeds done amidst its fashioning. The result of all this was often a building in which the many changes, though harsh and visible enough, were by their very contrast interesting and instructive, and could by no possibility mislead. But those who make the changes wrought in our day under the name of Restoration, while professing to bring back a building to the best time of its history, have no

guide but each his own individual whim to point out to them what is admirable and what contemptible: while the very nature of their task compels them to destroy something, and to supply the gap by imagining what the earlier builders should or might have done. Moreover, in the course of this double process of destruction and addition, the whole surface of the building is necessarily tampered with; so that the appearance of antiquity is taken away from such old parts of the fabric as are left, and there is no laying to rest in the spectator the suspicion of what may have been lost; and in short, a feeble and lifeless forgery is the final result of all the wasted labour.

"Of all the Restorations yet undertaken the worst have meant the reckless stripping a building of some of its most interesting material features; while the best have their exact analogy in the Restoration of an old picture, where the partly perished work of the ancient craftsmaster has been made neat and smooth by the tricky hand of some unoriginal and thoughtless hack of to-day. If, for the rest, it be asked us to specify what kind or amount of art, style, or other interest in a building, makes it worth protecting, we answer, Anything which can be looked on as artistic, picturesque, historical, antique, or substantial: any work, in short, over which educated artistic people would think it worth while to argue at all.

"It is for all these buildings, therefore, of all times and styles, that we plead, and call upon those who have to deal with them, to put Protection in the place of Restoration, to stave off decay by daily care, to prop a perilous wall or mend a leaky roof by such means as are obviously meant for support or covering, and show no pretence of other art, and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament of the

building as it stands; if it has become inconvenient for its present use, to raise another building rather than alter or enlarge the old one; in fine, to treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying."

Among the celebrated names whom the newly-founded Society was able to announce as members was that of Carlyle. The story of how he was induced to join it is highly characteristic: I owe it to Mr. William De Morgan, through whom, as a neighbour and friend, living in Cheyne Row a few doors off, Carlyle was approached.

"I sent the prospectus to Carlyle," Mr. De Morgan tells me, "through his niece Miss Aitken, and afterwards called by appointment to elucidate further. The philosopher didn't seem in the mood to join anything—in fact it seemed to me that the application was going to be fruitless. But fortunately Sir James Stephen was there when I called, and Carlyle passed me on to him with the suggestion that I had better make him a convert first. However, Sir James declined to be converted, on the ground that the owners or guardians of ancient buildings had more interest than any one else in preserving them, and would do it, and so forth. I replied with a case to the contrary, that of Wren's churches and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. This brought Carlyle out with a panegyric of Wren, who was, he said, a really great man, 'of extraordinary patience with fools,' and he glared round at the company reproachfully. However, he promised to think it over, chiefly, I think, because Sir James Stephen had rather implied that the Society's object was not worth thinking over. He added one or two severe comments on the contents of space.

"I heard from his niece next day that he was wavering, and that a letter from Morris might have a good effect. I asked for one, and received the following:

"'Horrington House,
"'April 3.

"'My dear De Morgan,

"'I should be sorry indeed to force Mr. Carlyle's inclinations on the matter in question, but if you are seeing him I think you might point out to him that it is not only artists or students of art that we are appealing to, but thoughtful people in general. For the rest it seems to me not so much a question whether we are to have old buildings or not, as whether they are to be old or sham old: at the lowest I want to make people see that it would surely be better to wait while architecture and the arts in general are in their present experimental condition before doing what can never be undone, and *may* at least be ruinous to what it intends to preserve.

"'Yours very truly,
"'William Morris."

"Next day," Mr. De Morgan goes on, "I received from Miss Aitken a letter from Carlyle to the Society, accepting membership. It made special allusion to Wren, and spoke of his City churches as 'marvellous works, the like of which we shall never see again,' or nearly that. Morris had to read this at the first public meeting—you may imagine that he didn't relish it, and one heard it in the way he read it—I fancy he added mentally, 'And a good job too!'"

Morris's prejudice against the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was indeed carried to a pitch that

amounted to pure unreasonableness: and in the work of Wren and his successors he steadily declined to acknowledge either fitness, or dignity, or elegance.

The rather lumbering title of the Society was at an early date replaced for familiar usage by the more terse and expressive name of the Anti-Scrape, a word of Morris's own invention. Two months after its formation he writes to a friend: "By the way you have not yet joined our Anti-Scrape Society: I will send you the papers of it: the subscription is only 10/6, and may save you something if people ask for subscriptions to restorations by enabling you to say, 'I am sorry, but be damned—look here.'"

Meanwhile Morris had been swept into politics by an impulse no less powerful and sincere against barbarism. If ancient buildings were all but alive to him, and he felt their ruin and defacement as a kind of physical torture, his sympathy with oppressed fellow-creatures rather gained than lost in force from this feeling. The collapse of the Turkish Government in its European provinces during the year 1876 had been accompanied by massacres and torture on a prodigious scale in Bulgaria, the news of which in England, at first received with incredulous apathy, gradually roused an overpowering horror and indignation. The armed intervention of Russia, though it did not take place till the following April, had been long foreseen; and feeling in England was torn violently asunder between traditional jealousy of Russia and sympathy with the oppressed Christian populations. For long the former feeling was predominant both in the Government and in the nation; and the group of persons who towards the end of 1876 founded the Eastern Question Association were at first a minority, trifling in number, however powerful in the justice of their cause and the

strength of their convictions. Into this work Morris flung himself heart and soul: he was treasurer of the Association, and through the Russo-Turkish War, and the confused and hostile negotiations which followed, worked hard for it with tongue and pen.

On the 15th of November, when the first steps were being taken towards organizing the movement, he wrote to Faulkner at Oxford:

"I am very willing to receive you as a convert if you must needs ticket yourself so, though I don't see the need, as both your views and mine being interpreted meant declaring ourselves enemies of that den of thieves the Turkish Government. As to the Russians, all I say is this: we *might* have acted so that they could have had no pretext for interfering with Turkey except in accordance with the unanimous wish of Europe: we *have* so acted as to drive them into separate interference whatever may come: and to go to war with them for this would be a piece of outrageous injustice. Furthermore if we came victorious out of such a war, what should we do with Turkey, if we didn't wish to be damned? 'Take it ourselves,' says the bold man, 'and rule it as we rule India.' But the bold man don't live in England at present I think; and I know what the Tory trading stock-jobbing scoundrel that one calls an Englishman to-day would do with it: he would shut his eyes hard over it, get his widows and orphans to lend it money, and sell it vast quantities of bad cotton. For the rest, I know that the Russians have committed many crimes, but I cannot accuse them of behaving ill in this Turkish business at present, and I must say I think it very unfair of us, who freed our black men, to give them no credit for freeing their serfs: both deeds seem to me to be great landmarks in history. However, I repeat,

to finish, that my cry and that of all that I consider *really* on our side is 'The Turkish Government to the Devil, and something rational and progressive in its place.' If people say that latter part is difficult, I can only say that it is difficult to make a pair of shoes, or even a poem; and yet both deeds are sometimes done;—more or less ill 'tis true."

"I do not feel very sanguine about it all," he adds, after giving details as to the action which it was proposed to take: "but since it is started and is the only thing that offers at present, and I do not wish to be anarchical, I must do the best I can with it."

Into the details of the historic controversy this is no place to enter: it is one long ago judged by time. But the manifesto which Morris issued in May, 1877, when the recent declaration of war by Russia had brought the Eastern Question into a very acute and dangerous stage, is remarkable, less for any unusual insight into what is called the political situation, than for the body to whom he addressed it, and the tone it took on political action in the largest sense. It contains his later socialist teaching as yet folded in the germ.

"To the working men of England" this manifesto is headed: and it contains this remarkable passage:

"Who are they that are leading us into war? Greedy gamblers on the Stock Exchange, idle officers of the army and navy (poor fellows!), worn-out mockers of the clubs, desperate purveyors of exciting war-news for the comfortable breakfast-tables of those who have nothing to lose by war; and lastly, in the place of honour, the Tory Rump, that we fools, weary of peace, reason, and justice, chose at the last election to represent us. Shame and double shame, if we march

under such leadership as this in an unjust war against a people who are not our enemies, against Europe, against freedom, against nature, against the hope of the world.

"Working men of England, one word of warning yet: I doubt if you know the bitterness of hatred against freedom and progress that lies at the hearts of a certain part of the richer classes in this country: their newspapers veil it in a kind of decent language; but do but hear them talking among themselves, as I have often, and I know not whether scorn or anger would prevail in you at their folly and insolence. These men cannot speak of your order, of its aims, of its leaders, without a sneer or an insult: these men, if they had the power (may England perish rather!), would thwart your just aspirations, would silence you, would deliver you bound hand and foot for ever to irresponsible capital. Fellow-citizens, look to it, and if you have any wrongs to be redressed, if you cherish your most worthy hope of raising your whole order peacefully and solidly, if you thirst for leisure and knowledge, if you long to lessen these inequalities which have been our stumbling-block since the beginning of the world, then cast aside sloth and cry out against an Unjust War, and urge us of the middle classes to do no less."

Throughout this period his letters are full of the same excitement, and of the same feeling that it was to the working classes that the only useful appeal could be made. "I was at the working-men's meeting at the Cannon Street Hotel on Wednesday," he writes on the 4th of May; "it was quite a success; they seem to have advanced since last autumn. Some of them spoke very well, nor would the meeting so much as listen to George Potter on the other side. Burt

(M.P. for Morpeth and who is, or was, a working man) was chairman, and spoke excellently though shortly, with a strong Northumbrian tongue: he seemed a capital fellow. Meantime the Liberal party is blown to pieces, and everything is in confusion."

As summer passed over, the shadow of imminent war lifted: but in autumn Morris was once more eagerly at work on the Committee which, under the presidency of Lord Lawrence, strove unavailingly to prevent the Afghan campaign, which was accepted by the war-party in England as an equivalent for open hostilities with Russia. At the beginning of 1878, when the Russian troops had forced the Balkans, the crisis became acute again. "This is terrible news," he writes on the 5th of January, when war seemed all but certain. "I confess I am really astounded at the folly that can play with such tremendous tools in this way; and more and more I feel how entirely right the flattest democracy is." At a meeting held in Exeter Hall on the 16th to protest against the threatening attitude of the Government, Morris appeared for the first time as a writer of political verse. "Wake, London Lads!" a stirring ballad written by him for the occasion, was distributed in the hall and sung with much enthusiasm. Here, as in the manifesto of the previous year, the appeal is to the "political working man," as Morris calls him in a letter describing this meeting, and is made in the name of the future and its hope. When the crisis in the East was finally past, it left Morris thoroughly in touch with the Radical leaders of the working class in London, and well acquainted with the social and economic ideas which, under the influence of widening education and of the international movement among the working classes, were beginning to transform their political creed from

an individualist Radicalism into a more or less definite doctrine of State Socialism.

Morris's absorption in wider interests during this period was accompanied by a fresh development of energy in his own professional work. The dyeing and calico printing industry, still mainly carried on at Leek, was now established as an important branch of the business, and the designing of patterns for chintzes and figured silks was part of his daily work. Weaving both in silk and wool had also taken its place alongside of dyeing in his own workshops. "I am dazzled," he writes in March, 1877, "at the prospect of the splendid work we might turn out in that line." A French brocade-weaver from Lyons, M. Bazin, was brought over in June to set up the first silk-loom. As to this and other work begun or projected, Morris wrote to Mr. T. Wardle on the 13th of April:

"Thank you for getting me news of the brocader. We are willing to agree to his terms of 3,000 fr. for the year, and think it would be prudent not to guarantee for longer: but if he suits us, no doubt the situation will be a permanent one for him. I think before we strike a bargain we should see his specimens of work: meantime we send a parcel of examples of cloth such as we are likely to want as far as the weaving is concerned. We shall have to find him standing-room for the loom: what space and height is wanted for this? we should by all means want it big enough to weave the widest cloth that can be done *well* without steam-power: and it ought to be such as could weave a design 27 inches wide. We should certainly want to weave damask. I hope that your correspondent understands that we want a really intelligent man: if he turn out such, his position with us will be good, as we should surely be wanting more looms, and he

would be foreman over the others. As soon as we are agreed, he must let us know when he can come, and send us some proper paper for pointing, in order that we may get a design ready for him without delay. So much for the brocader, when I have thanked you again very much for getting me on so far, and confessed that I am prodigiously excited about him.

"The tapestry is a bright dream indeed; but it must wait till I get my carpets going; though I have had it in my head lately, because there is a great sale now on in Paris of some of the finest ever turned out: much too splendid for anybody save the biggest pots to buy. Meantime much may be done in carpets: I saw yesterday a piece of ancient Persian, time of Shah Abbas (our Elizabeth's time) that fairly threw me on my back: I had no idea that such wonders could be done in carpets.

"We met again last night and are getting on I think: are going to expostulate with Ormskirk, Halifax, and Cherry-Hinton (*young* Scott's this last) at once. As for the old bird, all I can say is that he is convicted out of his own mouth of having made an enormous fortune by doing what he well knows to be wrong."

Early in that summer, the premises which have since then been the sale and show rooms for the firm's work had been opened in a newly-built block of buildings at the corner of Oxford Street and North Audley Street. The expanding business and the inaccessibility of Queen Square to the ordinary purchaser forced on this step. "I can't say I am much excited about it," was Morris's own comment, "as I should be if it were a shed with a half-dozen looms in it." The Queen Square premises were now wholly set free for the manufacturing part of the business, and the increased business filled up the free space at once. It cannot

be denied that Morris looked on the political situation, as he was bound to do, from the point of view of the manufacturer, as well as that of the politician and social reformer. "Picture to yourself," he writes in May, "a three years' war, and the shop in Oxford Street, and poor Smith standing at the door with his hands in his pockets!"

During this year, Morris had as secretary and general helper at Queen Square a son of his old tutor Canon Guy. In October he left in order to go to Oxford, having made up his mind to take Orders. A diary which he kept during the last few months of his employment at Queen Square has been preserved, and gives a lively picture of the common course of work there as it went on from day to day. By Mr. Guy's permission I give a few typical extracts. The multifariousness of the master's energy, and the many difficulties that had to be contended with when any new kind of work was being started, are alike noticeable.

"18 May. Mr. Morris slept last night in town, and was up on the move when I arrived. He had been downstairs and set the new dye-pot at work, ready for him to set an indigo vat in the afternoon. Kirby's man came and finished fixing the ciphering tube. G. W. and W. M. talked over Mrs. Baring's house in Devonshire: the work we have proposed to do will certainly take two or three years before all completed: we have to get our Lyons silk-weaver at work for one thing. W. M. did a little work to a piece of embroidery in his room during the morning. I went down into the dye-shop with W. M. between 1 and 2 o'clock and helped him to set his vat. He dyed some blues which he will green on Tuesday next, if all is well, for Dimarco's carpet stuff. Mr. Broadhurst called and saw W. M. about the Eastern Question.

"5 June. Mr. Wardle away at Richmond in morning. Mr. Morris came at midday: he dyed some blue silks in cochineal and madder to get purples: he has not yet learnt the real upshot of this dyeing; it is hard to get the colour on. Some of McCrea's wool was also dyed in the cochineal bath. Our clients are slow to pay their bills, this leads us into nasty difficulties. Mr. Morris spent the whole of this afternoon dyeing. Adams called about the Baptistery windows in All Saints, Putney; the two windows were ordered. Marlborough College window is ready to be sent.

"7 June. Dyeing was madder. Mr. Morris wished to get a ply of blood red such as was dyed at Leek in February last, for a hanging pattern. He used 2 lb. of madder for 2½ lb. of wool (3 hanks of weft and 2 hanks of warp). The colour in the end was not quite as deep as was wanted, owing to there being not a sufficient quantity of madder. When he was at Leek he used 80 lb. of madder for 100 lb. of wool, but you have to force the quantity a little when dyeing a small quantity of wools. In the spent bath other wools were dyed. No news from Bazin yet about the pointing. There was a meeting at 264, Oxford Street, in evening, of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings. The Dean of Canterbury has written a letter on the subject of restoring the Cathedral; it was rather a cut against W. M., but however he will answer it no doubt.

"21 June. A letter came from Bazin saying that he leaves Lyons to-night for England. Murray came and saw G. W. in the afternoon; he has just returned from Italy. He showed G. W. some of his sketches. While he was there, W. M. came in; he has finished his work at the South Kensington Museum, which he did not care for much: he could not say anything for

the designs which were produced by the students; he considered his time as having been wasted I believe. It is quite true about our red carpet having faded. W. M. is astonished at it. We had the cards down from the window to see the results of light and air upon the reds; they really have not much effect, but still a little; but the wools have been exposed to the light nearly a year, and had moreover to stand through all that strong sun of last year, as well as that of this year: no carpet is ever exposed so much to the light. The weld greens have gone, and W. M. is very lamentable over them. There are many secrets yet to be found out about dyeing. W. M. thinks that the Indian vat is the best for silks, and perhaps he will find out that it is the best for yarns; he intends setting one again soon. The blues (yarns) seemed to have stood a good deal, and W. M. is almost inclined now to say that they are the fastest of our dyes.

"25 June. The Heckmondwike Company sent up a woven pattern of the 3-ply green tulip carpet. W. M. called it dove-like, and so it is, the colours are very nice and well toned down. Bazin and a friend made their arrival in the afternoon; W. M. did not feel as if he wished to face Froggy at first, but said to G. W. (who went to receive the weaver) that he would be up in his room, if wanted; but G. W. did not wish to exercise his French alone, but took the two new arrivals up into W. M.'s room. The Frenchmen went round to Ormond Yard with W. M. and G. W. to see what cards we have (these are the cards which we had from Lyons). Froggy says they will do for his purpose, and we shall have to set him at work at once on the silk willow pattern, using these cards. He will take some time in setting up the loom, which will give us time to get silk and to dye it perhaps.

"12 July. Mr. Lendon called about Bazin's work; he gave us some instructions about the point paper, etc. He went round to Ormond Yard and saw the loom; the carpenter finished his work at midday. W. M. dyed a few silks in cochineal. He says that he cannot get on at all with this dye: he cannot make it out, he is unable to get a deep colour on. It will dye the deepest colour in a few minutes, and after that the colour will not get deeper, no matter how long you keep your goods in the decoction. I mordanted a few hanks of wool for to-morrow's experiments, which are to be in the fustic line.

"23 July. I tried to get the Indian vat set to-day, but the indigo, which has to be ground, prevented me. I hope to do so to-morrow.

"24 July. I was hard at work with the vat and managed to get it set by 5 p.m. W. M. helped, and as he slept in town he was able to look at it before going to bed. Silks were alumed for to-morrow's dyeing (weld and walnut, also madder).

"25 July. The vat was coming round all day; she seemed to be doing well at 6.30, when I left; a coppery scum was coming on the surface.

"27 July. The vat seemed to be doing well to-day; a little silk dyeing was done for experiments. A brevet was given her at 5 p.m. Not very much business done.

"28 July. The hopeful Indian vat brought W. M. up to town (an unusual thing for him to do on a Saturday): the vat had come round very well by this morning; she was in a fit state for dyeing, and W. M. tried some wool in her, which proved to be successful. Still she was not quite come round to her proper form. A little cochineal dyeing was done; blues were dyed purple.

"20 Sept. Bazin began to weave, but the machinery (Jacquard) not being in very good order, he was unable to get on very far. I prepared an estimate for east end window, All Saints, Putney.

"21 Sept. Mr. Morris turned up from Kelmscott early, and as soon as he did so I went round to Ormond Yard with him, to see how Bazin had got on. He had got on better in working the machine than yesterday, but yet the (willow) pattern did not seem to be coming right, and it seemed as if the cards had got misplaced somehow or other. The cards were making an absurd pattern, and W. M. did not know what to make of it. W. M. returned to Kelmscott by the 6.30 train.

"8 Oct. W. M. had to see about his packages, which he has to take to Ireland. He started by 8.25 mail train to Holyhead from Euston. He goes to the Countess of Charleville, Tullamore, King's County, to advise her as to the doing up of her house. He had to take with him patterns of carpets, silks, chintzes, etc. He goes to Leek on his way back from Ireland, and will stay there some while, making Tom Wardle look to his dyeing, etc., helping a good deal in it too."

This was Morris's first visit to Ireland. In a letter he wrote from Leek after his return, there is the old keen eye for scenery; but there is also a new tone, that of the social observer, one might almost say of the political theorist.

"I slept on board," he says, "for about two hours, and then stirred myself to get up and look, and when I came on deck we were just well in sight of land. It was much more beautiful than I expected to see: a long rather low cliffy coast on the right with a rocky steep island in front of it; and on the left a

long line of mountains rather than hills going on and turning the corner, and casting up points a long way inland: the said mountains very lovely in outline. The sky was grey and sulky, but not unfit for the scene, and a thickish mist hid all the feet of the mountains, while a cloud or two was lying on the tops of them: it looked very like Iceland and quite touched my hard heart.

"Dublin is not altogether an ugly town; the Liffey runs through the chief street much like the Seine at Paris, which is good: yet a dirty and slatternly city is Dublin, and Guinness seems the only thing of importance there. I set off at about midday for my aristocrats; the train running through a very flat country with the aforesaid Dublin mountains on the left; you pass the Curragh, where our army of occupation sits, a fine moorland swelling up toward the Dublin mountains: then you see Kildare, with a great ruined mediæval church and a tall round tower beside it. Then the Dublin mountains die away, and the Slievh Bloom hills rise up on the left of the great plain; which is to say the truth nothing but bog, reclaimed, half-reclaimed, or unreclaimed: in Elizabeth's time thick forest covered it, but the oaks and all are gone now. The villages we passed were very poor-looking, the cotters' houses in outside appearance the very poorest habitations of man I have yet seen, Iceland by no means excepted.

"Tullamore, my town, lies a little without the old Pale: my employers told me that it used to be the very centre of ribbonism; even last year a man was slain there for 'agrarian' reasons. They told me that an old man had told them how he had seen in the rebellion 20 miles of country burning in a straight line, the cabins and villages fired by the Orange

yeomanry: the grandfather of the present young lady who owns the estate commanded the troops of that district in the war, and his banners hang up very little the worse for wear in the hall of the house now—and these unreasonable Irish still remember it all, so long-memoried they are!"

In November, 1877, Mrs. Morris and the two girls had gone to spend the winter at Oneglia on the Italian Riviera, where Morris himself was to join them in spring and make a tour with them through Northern Italy. His letters to Oneglia during these months give an unusually full account of his life and work during the winter. They are full of the Eastern Question, and the work of the Anti-Scrape, and the progress made by Bazin at the silk-loom in Ormond Yard, where "a poor old ex-Spitalfields weaver" had been found to help; and also of a new and at first to him very laborious employment, that of composing and delivering lectures. The first lecture he ever gave in public was on the Decorative Arts. It was delivered before the Trades Guild of Learning, in what he calls "a dismal hole near Oxford Street," on the 4th of December. It was published immediately afterwards by Messrs. Ellis and White as a pamphlet; and was reprinted, under the title of "The Lesser Arts," as the first of the collected addresses published in the volume of "Hopes and Fears for Art." The writing of prose was as yet as difficult to him as the writing of verse was easy, and he ruefully recognized that it was a thing he must work at unassisted.

"I should be glad to be out of Horrington House," he writes on the 29th of November, "'tis rather a doleful abode at present. I was thinking last Saturday of having Sarah up to read scraps of my lecture to her after the example of Molière, but refrained, lest I

should kill her with surprise. I went with Wardle to the place and read 'Robinson Crusoe' to him to see if I could make my voice heard, which I found easy to be done."

"I gave my lecture on Tuesday," he continues on the 7th of December; "it went off very well, and I was not at all nervous. I have been having an afternoon with Froggy, the loom, and our Coventry 'designer' so-called: the loom was the wisest of the four of us and understood much more of what the others said than anybody else did—at least I think so."

"I am just come back from Kelmscott," a week later, "where I was two days with Webb: it was rather melancholy after our jolly time of last summer: we had two fine, but very cold days; this morning brilliant but white-frosty. The river had been much flooded, but was lower the first day, and I caught two good pike: I should like to have sent you one in a letter. The blown-down tree *is* that one by the causeway gate: it makes a sad gap, for it was a fine branchy tree."

From his mother's house in Hertfordshire he writes to the children on Christmas Day:

"I have been much agitated for the past week by the goings on of an August Personage and Lord Beaconsfield; but we hope to agitate others in our turn next week. On the whole our side has got weaker, and many people are sluggish and hard to move who thoroughly agree with us. The E. Q. A. met in committee yesterday and agreed to do something, though not as dramatically as I could have wished: however, we meet again next Monday, and then I hope we shall arrange to have a big meeting before Parliament. So much for politics: 'tis a fine Christmas Day to-day, though there has been a little

snow. We have just had a peppering little snow-shower, item, a cock-pheasant has been on the lawn just now: these are bits of Hadham news you know, my dears."

On the 19th of January he gives an account of the Eastern Question Meeting at Exeter Hall the night before. "The evening meeting was magnificent, orderly and enthusiastic, though mind you it took some very heavy work to keep the enemies' roughs out, and the noise of them outside was like the sea roaring against a lighthouse. You will have seen about our music: wasn't it a good idea? I think Chesson suggested it first, and then they set me to write the song, which I did on the Monday night. It went down very well, and they sang it well together: they struck up while we were just ready to come on the platform, and you may imagine I felt rather excited when I heard them begin to tune up. They stopped at the end of each verse and cheered lustily."

"I am full of shame and anger," he writes to Faulkner on the 5th of February, "at the cowardice of the so-called Liberal party. A very few righteous men refuse to sit down at the bidding of these yelling scoundrels and pretend to agree with what they hate: these few are determined with the help of our working-men allies (who all along have been both staunch and sagacious) to get up a great demonstration in London as soon as may be, which will probably be Saturday week. There will certainly be a fight, so of course you will come up if you can."

The collapse came a week later. "To-morrow I am going to Cambridge," he writes on February 20th, "to give an address at the School of Art for Colvin. As to my political career, I think it is at an end for the present; and has ended sufficiently disgustingly.

after beating about the bush and trying to organize some rags of resistance to the war-party for a fortnight, After spending all one's time in committees and the like, I went to Gladstone with some of the workmen and Chesson, to talk about getting him to a meeting at the Agricultural Hall: he agreed, and was quite hot about it, and as brisk as a bee. I went off straight to the Hall, and took it for to-morrow: to work we fell, and everything got into train: but—on Monday our Parliamentaries began to quake, and they have quaked the meeting out now. The E. Q. A. was foremost in the flight, and really I must needs say they behaved ill in the matter. Gladstone was quite ready to come up to the scratch and has behaved well throughout: but I am that ashamed that I can scarcely look people in the face, though I did my best to keep the thing up. The working men are in a great rage about it, as they well may be: for I do verily believe we should have made it a success, though I don't doubt that there would have been a huge row. There was a stormy meeting of the E. Q. A. yesterday, full of wretched little personalities, but I held my tongue —I am out of it now; I mean as to bothering my head about it: I shall give up reading the papers, and shall stick to my work."

That work indeed was just then as engrossing and exciting to him as ever: and he was really glad to get back to it from the unfamiliar field of politics, work in which he took too seriously for his own comfort, and perhaps even for real effectiveness.

The project of reviving the art of high-warp tapestry-weaving, as it had been practised in its great days, was beginning to shape itself in his mind as something more than the bright dream of the previous spring. To Mr. T. Wardle, who had continued to press the

matter on him as a practicable scheme, and suggested its being undertaken by them as a joint enterprise, he wrote on the 14th of November, 1877, a long and interesting letter, which not only lays down the scope and difficulties of the work, but incidentally sets forth very clearly his own principles regarding this and other branches of decorative manufacture.

"I shall probably find one letter's space," he says, "not enough for going into the whole matter of the tapestry, but I will begin. Let's clear off what you say about the possibility of establishing a non-artistic manufactory. You could do it, of course; 'tis only a matter of money and trouble: but *cui bono?* it would not amuse you (unless I wholly misunderstand you), and would, I am sure, *not* pay commercially: a *cheap* new article at once showy and ugly, if advertised with humbug enough, will sell, of course: but an expensive article, even with ugliness to recommend it—I don't think anything under a Duke could sell it. However, as to the commercial element of this part of the scheme, 'tis not my affair, but on the art side you must remember that, as nothing is so beautiful as fine tapestry, nothing is so ugly and base as bad: *e.g.*, the Gobelins or the present Aubusson work: also tapestry is not fit for anything but figure-work (except now and then I shall mention wherein presently). The shuttle and loom beat it on one side, the needle on the other, in pattern-work: but for figure-work 'tis the only way of making a web into a picture: now there is only one man at present living (as far as I know) who can give you pictures at once good enough and suitable for tapestry—to wit, Burne-Jones. The exception I mentioned above would be the making of leaf and flower pieces (greeneries, *des verdures*), which would generally be used to eke out a set of figure-pieces: these would

be within the compass of people, work-folk, who could not touch the figure-work. It would only be by doing these that you could cheapen the work at all.

"The qualifications for a person who would do successful figure-work would be these:

"1. General feeling for art, especially for its decorative side.

"2. He must be a good colourist.

"3. He must be able to draw well; *i.e.*, he must be able to draw the human figure, especially hands and feet.

"4. Of course he must know how to use the stitch of the work.

"Unless a man has these qualities, the first two of which are rare to meet with and cannot be taught, he will turn out nothing but bungles, disgraceful to every one concerned in the matter: I have no idea where to lay my hands on such a man, and therefore I feel that whatever I do I must do chiefly with my own hands. It seems to me that tapestry cannot be made a matter of what people nowadays call manufacturing, and that even so far as it can be made so, the only possible manufacturer must be an artist for the higher kind of work: otherwise all he has to do is to find house room, provide the frame and warp, and coloured worsteds exactly as the workman bids him. In speaking thus I am speaking of the picture-work: a cleverish woman could do the greeneries no doubt. When I was talking to you at Leek I did not fully understand what an entirely individual matter it must be: it is just like wood-engraving: it is a difficult art, but there is nothing to *teach* that a man cannot learn in half a day, though it would take a man long practice to do it well. There *are* manufacturers of wood-engraving, *e.g.*, the Dalziels, as big humbugs as any within the

narrow seas. I suspect you scarcely understand what a difficult matter it is to translate a painter's design into material: I have been at it sixteen years now, and have never quite succeeded.

"In spite of all these difficulties, if in any way I can help you, I will: only you must understand fully that I intend setting up a frame and working at it myself, and I should bargain for my being taught by you what is teachable: also I see no difficulty in your doing greeneries and what patterns turned out desirable, and I would make myself responsible for the designs of such matters. With all this, I have no doubt that we shall both lose money over the work: you don't know how precious little people care for such things.

"To recapitulate: Tapestry at its highest is the painting of pictures with coloured wools on a warp: nobody but an artist can paint pictures; but a sort of half-pictures, *i.e.*, scroll-work or leafage, could be done by most intelligent people (young girls would do) under direction.

"I am sorry if in any way I appear to have wet-blanketed you: but the matter is such an important one that it is no use avoiding the facing of the truth in all ways, and I have accordingly given you my mind without concealment."

He began to make designs for greeneries forthwith, and studied pieces of old tapestry with minute care. In March, 1878, he writes again to Wardle:

"I inclose a warp from a sixteenth-century piece of tapestry, which as you see is worsted: the pitch is 12 to the inch: nothing in tapestry need be finer than this. In setting up your work you must remember that as tapestry hangs on the wall the warps are horizontal, though of course you weave with them

vertical. If you send me the space of your loom I will make a design for it.

"Thanks for sending me Arnold's lecture,"—this was the address on "Equality" delivered at the Royal Institution in the previous month and afterwards reprinted in the volume of Matthew Arnold's "Mixed Essays"—"with the main part of which of course I heartily agree: the only thing is that if he has any idea of a remedy he durstn't mention it. I think myself that no rose-water will cure us: disaster and misfortune of all kinds, I think, will be the only things that will breed a remedy: in short, nothing can be done till all rich men are made poor by common consent. I suppose he dimly sees this, but is afraid to say it, being, though naturally a courageous man, somewhat infected with the great vice of that cultivated class he was praising so much—cowardice, to wit."

The strain and excitement of the political campaign of that winter ended in a severe attack of rheumatic gout, which seized and quite crippled him when he went out to join his family in Italy towards the end of April. It prevented him from being much more than a passive participator in the long-planned and eagerly awaited Italian tour. The machinery had been taxed beyond its power: he never quite regained his old strength, and in the following year there can be traced in his letters the first shadow of advancing age: not indeed a surprising thing in a man who had accomplished work so immense in its mass and so high in its quality by the age of forty-five.

From Genoa he writes on the 27th of April to Mrs. Burne-Jones:

"We entered this ancient city yesterday evening by no means triumphantly: we had a lovely drive on Thursday morning to a hill town with an ancient stone

or two in its buildings, which are now nothing but tatters of disorder: yet it was agreeable and not very dirty. Diano Castello it is called: people used to run there when the Saracen Vikings burnt Diano Marina and the shore in general: unhappily, though that drive was pleasant, and the evening wandering among the olives was pleasant, I felt the seeds of gout in me all day, and woke yesterday morning with that plant flourishing vigorously: but I didn't like to keep them stuck at Oneglia, as all preparations had been made for departure: so about midday we got away, and I found myself in a carriage somehow along with my dear Jenny, and a very pleasant ride we had to Genoa with my gout seemingly decreasing: but when we all met at the station there was a long way to go to the omnibus, and the octroi objected to the box of medicines (thinking them syrops), and I could not walk or even hop well, so I got stuck, till a chap took me up on his back: but even then I behaved so ill as this, that when he set me down against a wall (lacking nothing of Guy Fawkes but his matches and lanthorn) things began to dance before my eyes, my knees went limp, and down I went, thank you, and enjoyed a dream of some minute and a quarter I suppose, which seemed an afternoon of public meetings and the like: out of that I woke and found myself on the ground the centre of an admiring crowd, one of the members of which held a brandy bottle to my lips which I had the presence of mind to refuse and call for water. Poor May, who was with me, was very much frightened, but was very good: even then I had to be Guy Fawkesed upstairs at the Hotel, chuckling with laughter, till they landed me in this present palatial suite of rooms: so I'm not likely to be able to tell you much of Genoa, I fear. Murray, who is

still with us, has taken the two girls out for a walk; I can't help thinking that they will enjoy the port and the streets of a big town after the quiet of Oneglia, though I, for my part, when I wandered among the olives above the sea the other day, felt as if I should be well contented to stay there always; it really was a most lovely spot: and it was pleasant to have the high road close by it and to hear the jingle of bells as the carts went by, though when you were among the olives you could not guess of any road near: the trees went on terrace after terrace right up to the top of the low hill: you could see nothing else: nothing can be imagined more beautiful and soothing.

"This confounded gout and Guy Fawkesing of mine has of course put off our journey to-day, but I am much better now, and I hope we shall get on to Venice to-morrow: we shan't attempt stopping at Verona, where we can easily put up on our return: you see if we were once at Venice Janey and the girls could amuse themselves in any case; and as for me 'tis clear that Venice must be the hobbler's Paradise. Can't you imagine what a time it was for me when I looked out at the window at Oneglia, and saw those three all standing together?"

On the way to Venice the first view of the Lago di Garda gave him a shock of delight more powerful than anything else he saw in Italy. "What a strange surprise it was," he says, "when it suddenly broke upon me, with such beauty as I never expected to see: for a moment I really thought I had fallen asleep and was dreaming of some strange sea where everything had grown together in perfect accord with wild stories." At Venice itself he was so lame that he could only crawl into a few churches. In his letters it is difficult to distinguish the depression of his illness from his pain

at the decay, and his horror at the restorations, going on all round him: "It is sad to think," he sums the matter up, "that our children's children will not be able to see a single genuine ancient building in Europe." A visit to Torcello ("it was a great rest to be among the hedges and the green grass again, and to hear the birds singing; swifts are the only songsters in the city") he speaks of as almost his one unmixed pleasure there.

Indeed he was always uneasy away from the earth and the green grass; and when they left Venice for Padua and Verona his spirits began to rise. "What a beautiful and *pleasant* place it is," he writes of Padua, "with the huge hall dividing the market place, and the endless arcades everywhere: or the Arena Chapel in the midst of the beautiful garden of trellised vines, all as green as the greenest just now. Yesterday was a stormy day, and in the afternoon the girls and I were caught in a shower as we were wandering about; however, it was but wandering in an arcade till it was over, and as the pavement was clean and dry I sat down with great content with my back to the wall. A dyer's hand-cart took refuge by us with a load of blue work (cotton) just done: I was so sorry I could not talk with one of the men, who looked both good-tempered and intelligent. In the evening we went to a queer old botanic garden and heard the birds sing, and then we were driven along the road outside the walls. The rain had cleared off but left great threatening clouds that quite hid the Alps, but the small mountains to the west of Padua were quite clear and blue, and set me longing to be among them. It was a beautiful evening, but damp I doubt; but how sweet the hay smelt!"

From Verona he writes a little later: "'Tis a piping

hot day, not a cloud in the sky. I have just been into Sta. Anastasia, which is hard by: a very beautiful church, but appeals less to the heart than the head, and somehow don't satisfy that: also though 'tis meant to be exceedingly Gothic and pointed, it is thoroughly neo-classical in feeling. S. Zeno is not quite what I expected: 'tis a round-arched Gothic church, just as S. Anastasia is a pointed-arched Renaissance one. I am more alive again, and really much excited at all I have seen and am seeing, though sometimes it all tumbles into a dream and I do not know where I am. Many times I think of the first time I ever went abroad, and to Rouen, and what a wonder of glory that was to me when I first came upon the front of the Cathedral rising above the flower-market. It scarcely happens to me like that now, at least not with man's work, though whiles it does with bits of the great world, like the Garda Lake the other day, or unexpected sudden sights of the mountains. Even the inside of St. Mark's gave one rather deep satisfaction, and rest for the eyes, than that strange exaltation of spirits, which I remember of old in France, and which the mountains give me yet.

"I don't think this is wholly because I am grown older, but because I really have had more sympathy with the North from the first in spite of all the faults of its work. Let me confess and be hanged: with the later work of Southern Europe I am quite out of sympathy. In spite of its magnificent power and energy I feel it as an enemy; and this much more in Italy, where there is such a mass of it, than elsewhere. Yes, and even in these magnificent and wonderful towns I long rather for the heap of grey stones with a grey roof that we call a house north-away."

Almost immediately afterwards a fresh attack of gout

hurried him to the North again. "I am still plaguy lame," he writes the day after his arrival in London, "a very limpet, but am not so devil-ridden as I was. I think that came of that infernal furnace-heat we were in, the last few days of Italy: it was such a relief when the cool mountain breezes woke me out of a doze as the train laboured up the last slopes before the great tunnel: and going through that merry Burgundy country with a fine windy sunny day I got quite merry myself."

Before going out to Italy he had arranged to take a new house in London, that one in which he lived for the rest of his life, on the Upper Mall at Hammersmith. It is a large Georgian house, of a type, ugly without being mean, familiar in the older London suburbs. It is only separated from the river by a narrow roadway, planted with large elms. The river indeed was so near a neighbour that at exceptionally high tides it occasionally brimmed over the sill of the water-gate in the low river wall, crossed the roadway, and flooded the cellarage of the house. The parapet along the edge had afterwards to be made continuous to avoid this danger. On bright days the sunlight strikes off the water and flickers over the ceilings: many barges and sailing boats go by with the tide, and the curve of the river opens out two long reaches, up by Chiswick Eyot with the wooded slopes of Richmond in the background, and down through Hammersmith Bridge. Behind the house a long rambling garden, in successive stages of lawn and orchard and kitchen-garden, still preserves some flavour of the country among the encroaching mass of building which is gradually swallowing up the scattered cottages, low and roofed with weathered red tiles, that then lay between the river and the high road. The house had some little history;

in its garden the inventor of the electric telegraph, Francis Ronalds, had in 1816 laid eight miles of insulated wires charged with static electricity, and worked by electrometers and synchronized rotating discs at either end. Fragments of his apparatus, the first electric communication ever practically worked, are still preserved in the South Kensington Museum. When Morris took it, it had just been vacated by Dr. George Macdonald, and was known as The Retreat; this name, as rather suggestive of a private asylum, he at once changed, and called it Kelmscott House, after his other home on the bank of the same river. The hundred and thirty miles of stream between the two houses were a real, as well as an imaginative, link between them. He liked to think that the water which ran under his windows at Hammersmith had passed the meadows and grey gables of Kelmscott; and more than once a party of summer voyagers went from one house to the other by water, embarking at their own door in London and disembarking in their own meadow at Kelmscott. "The situation," he wrote of it to his wife at Oneglia, "is certainly the prettiest in London (you may mock at this among the olives beside the Midland Sea): the house could easily be done up at a cost of money: the long drawing-room, with a touch of my art, could be made one of the prettiest in London: the garden is really most beautiful. If you come to think of it, you will find that you won't get a garden or a house with much character unless you go out about as far as the Upper Mall. I don't think that either you or I could stand a quite modern house in a street: I don't fancy going back among the bugs of Bloomsbury."

Kelmscott House was taken from Midsummer, and the Morrises moved into it at the end of October.

Under his skilful hands, the long drawing-room of which he speaks above—a handsome room with a range of five windows, filling the whole width of the house and looking out through the great elms over the river —had been made into a room quite unique in the quietness and beauty of its decoration. It was sufficiently out of the London dirt to admit of being hung with his own woven tapestry. The painted settle and cabinet, which were its chief ornaments, belonged to the earliest days of Red House; the rest of the furniture and decoration was all in the same spirit, and had all the effect of making the room a mass of subdued yet glowing colour, into which the eye sank with a sort of active sense of rest. Morris's own study on the ground floor was severely undecorated. It had neither carpet nor curtains; the walls were mostly filled with plain bookshelves of unpolished oak, and a square table of unpolished oak scrubbed into snowy whiteness, with a few chairs, completed its contents. One of the first things he did after taking possession of the house was to have a tapestry-loom built in his bedroom, at which he might practise the art of weaving with his own hands. He was often up and at work at his loom with the first daylight in spring and summer mornings. Among his few fragments of diaries is one which he kept of the first complete piece he wove there. It is headed "Diary of work on Cabbage and Vine Tapestry at Kelmscott House, Hammersmith. Begun May 10th, 1879, after Campfield about a week's work getting in, also after weaving a blue list." A table of the number of hours spent daily on it follows, up to the 17th of September, when it was finished. Except for three intervals during which he was out of London, there are only two blank days on the list, and there are a good many days on which he worked at it for

nine, and even for ten, hours. The total is 516 hours in the four months; and this was the work of a man who had a hundred other things to attend to, and who was never in a hurry! This tapestry-loom was for his own private use. The coach-house and stables adjoining the house were converted into a large weaving-room, the room afterwards used as the meeting-place of the Hammersmith Socialists. Carpet-looms were built there, and were soon regularly at work producing the fabrics which became known under the name of the Hammersmith carpets and rugs from this accident of their first origin.

During the winter of 1878-9, in fact, weaving in its various forms—on the Jacquard loom for figured silks, on the carpet-loom for pile carpets, and on the tapestry-loom for Arras tapestries—replaced dyeing as the chief object of Morris's interest. The regular work in examining at South Kensington, which he had begun two years before and which he continued till his last illness, had contributed to an increased interest in textiles. He had undertaken that work partly out of a feeling of gratitude for the immense service which the collections at the South Kensington Museum had been to him personally as a designer and manufacturer: "perhaps," he said incidentally in his evidence before the Royal Commission of 1882, "I have used it as much as any man living." The national collections there owe very much to him. For the last fifteen years of his life no important purchase of either textiles or embroideries was ever made without consulting him. "He never failed me," the Director of Art at South Kensington tells me, "and cheerfully put aside his own business when he knew that we had urgent need of his services. On one occasion he went with me to Paris at a few hours' notice and in very bad

weather, to attend a sale, and when there offered to advance a considerable sum of money for the benefit of the Department, as in the hurry of our departure from London it had been impossible for me to get sanction for such expenditure."

The embroideries, no less than the woven stuffs, produced at Queen Square, took a fresh start from the introduction of home-dyed silks. This is a point on which all the embroiderers who worked for him lay special emphasis. "There was a peculiar beauty in his dyeing," says Mrs. Holiday, one of the most highly qualified of his later pupils in the art of embroidery, "that no one else in modern times has ever attained to. He actually did create new colours; then in his amethysts and golds and greens, they were different to anything I have ever seen; he used to get a marvellous play of colour into them. The amethyst had flushings of red; and his gold (one special sort), when spread out in the large rich hanks, looked like a sunset sky. When he got an unusually fine piece of colour he would send it off to me or keep it for me; when he ceased to dye with his own hands I soon felt the difference. The colours themselves became perfectly level, and had a monotonous prosy look; the very lustre of the silk was less beautiful. When I complained, he said, 'Yes, they have grown too clever at it—of course it means they don't love colour, or they would do it.'"

"I am writing in a whirlwind of dyeing and weaving," says a letter of March, 1879, "and even as to the latter rather excited by a new piece just out of the loom, which looks beautiful, like a flower garden." Even at Kelmscott he missed the daily fascination of his work. "Somehow I feel," he wrote from there a few months later, "as if there must soon be an end

for me of playing at living in the country : a town-bird I am, a master-artisan, if I may claim that latter dignity." And again that same autumn, when he was much worried by work for the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, "Lord bless us," he breaks out, "how nice it will be when I can get back to my little patterns and dyeing, and the dear warp and weft at Hammersmith!"

THE LIFE OF WILLIAM MORRIS

CHAPTER XII

LONDON AND KELMSCOTT: THEORIES OF ART AND LIFE

1879-1881

But work among his dye-pots and looms, interesting and fascinating as he found it, could not fill up the whole of his mind. In spite of the variable excitement and the more settled rest of this daily work, voices from an outer world kept calling him more and more imperiously. For a time he tried to think that it was the voice of poetry that was calling, but the fancy brought no real conviction. "As to poetry," he writes in October, 1879, "I don't know, and I don't know. The verse would come easy enough if I had only a subject which would fill my heart and mind: but to write verse for the sake of writing is a crime in a man of my years and experience." He had in fact produced his poetry: the instincts of creation and invention had to find new outlets; and gradually the fabric of social life itself became the field which, as he

had done with specific arts already, he tried to redeem from commercialism and ugliness, and to reinstate on a sounder basis. He recognized the gravity of the enterprise; yet it did not then seem to him a desperate one. "I have seen a many wonders, and have a good memory for them; and in spite of all grumblings have a hope that civilized people will grow weary of their worst follies and try to live a less muddled and unreasonable life; not of course that we shall see much of that change in the remnant that is left of our days."

In this hope, and for work at anything that might lead towards its accomplishment, he was willing to give up ease and leisure, and much of what made life desirable. And one can trace the conviction growing in him very slowly, that towards forwarding the work some renunciation was necessary—it might be, he thought with a sudden pang, the giving up of Kelmscott. "I am sitting now, 10 p.m.," he writes from there in late autumn, "in the tapestry-room, the moon rising red through the east-wind haze, and a cow lowing over the fields. I have been feeling chastened by many thoughts, and the beauty and quietness of the surroundings, which latter, as I hinted, I am, as it were, beginning to take leave of. That leave-taking will, I must confess, though you may think it fantastic, seem a long step towards saying good-night to the world."

His ease, his leisure, in effect we may say his life, he did give up for the sake of this hope: but the giving up of Kelmscott was a pang that was spared to him. Nor would it be right to think of him as habitually occupied by these somewhat sombre broodings. When he did throw off work, his enjoyment remained that of a child. "All right," runs a note of this year to Ellis arranging for a couple of days'

fishing, "I think that is best. I am writing to Mrs. Comely to say positively that we will; so begone dull care: don't forget the worms." Another letter gives a description of his arrival with Webb at Kelmscott through the floods of that wet August. They had been at Salisbury, and he had seen Stonehenge for the first time. "I was much impressed by it," he wrote: "though the earth and sky nearly met, and the rain poured continuously, nothing could spoil the great stretches of the Plain, and the mysterious monument that nobody knows anything about—except Fergusson who knows less than nothing." From Amesbury they drove north across the Wiltshire downs.

"We went right up the Avon valley, and very beautiful it was; then, as the river narrowed, we turned off towards a little scrubby town called Pewsey that lies in the valley between the Salisbury and the Marlborough downs: it was all very fine and characteristic country, especially where we had to climb the Marlborough downs at a place that I remembered coming on as a boy with wonder and pleasure: Oare Hill they call it. We got early in the afternoon to Marlborough and walked out to see the College, and so strolled away to the Devil's Den, and back in the dusk. The next morning we set out early for Avebury, in weather at first much like the day before; however it cleared before we reached Silbury, and was quite fine while we were thereabout for two hours, after which we drove on towards Swindon, intending Lechlade and Kelmscott that evening. The downs end at a village called Wroughton, and we could see a large piece of England from the slope of it, Faringdon clump not at all in the background. We got another trap at Swindon, where they warned us that we should

have to go through the waters to get to Lechlade: we went through Highworth, a queer old village on a hill, and sure enough we could see waters out from thence, though they turned out to be only from the little river Cole: at Highworth we found that they were mending the bridge into Lechlade town, and that it would be closed; so at Inglesham we had to turn aside to strike the road that leads over St. John's Bridge: sure enough in a few yards we were in deep water enough, right over the axles of the wheels: the driver lost his presence of mind, not being used to floods you see, and pretty nearly spilt us in the ditch, but we just saved the carriage, and after some trouble got into the high road by Buscot Parsonage; though even there for some time the said road was also a river: so over St. John's Bridge and safe to Kelmscott. But opening the gate there, lo, the water all over the little front garden: in short, I have never seen so high a flood there: there was a smart shower when we got in and then a bright clear evening: the next day was bright and clear between strong showers with a stiff south-west gale: of course we could do nothing but sail and paddle about the floods."

During the following winter the manufacture of the Hammersmith rugs and carpets went busily on at Kelmscott House. By May enough specimens had been successfully produced to allow of a public exhibition of them. The circular written by Morris and issued by the firm on that occasion states the facts very clearly. This new branch of the business was "an attempt to make England independent of the East for carpets which may claim to be considered works of art."

"We believe," the circular goes on, "that the time has come for some one or other to make that attempt,

unless the civilized world is prepared to do without the art of Carpet-making at its best: for it is a lamentable fact that, just when we of the West are beginning to understand and admire the art of the East, that art is fading away, nor in any branch has the deterioration been more marked than in Carpet-making.

"All beauty of colour has now (and for long) disappeared from the manufactures of the Levant—the once harmonious and lovely Turkey Carpets. The traditions of excellence of the Indian Carpets are only kept up by a few tasteful and energetic providers in England with infinite trouble and at a great expense, while the mass of the goods are already inferior in many respects to what can be turned out mechanically from the looms of Glasgow or Kidderminster.

"As for Persia, the mother of this beautiful art, nothing could mark the contrast between the past and the present clearer than the Carpets, doubtless picked for excellence of manufacture, given to the South Kensington Museum by His Majesty the Schah, compared with the rough work of the tribes done within the last hundred years, which the Directors of the Museum have judiciously hung near them.

"In short, the art of Carpet-making, in common with the other special arts of the East, is either dead or dying fast; and it is clear to everyone that, whatever future is in store for those countries where it once flourished, they will, in time to come, receive all influence from, rather than give any to, the West.

"It seems to us, therefore, that, for the future, we people of the West must make our own hand-made Carpets, if we are to have any worth the labour and money such things cost; and that these, while they should equal the Eastern ones as nearly as may be in materials and durability, should by no means imitate

them in design, but show themselves obviously to be the outcome of modern and Western ideas, guided by those principles that underlie all architectural art in common."

Besides this labour of the loom, the year had been crowded with other more public work. Sweeping restorations were proposed and already in progress at St. Mark's, Venice: and Morris was the soul of the movement of protest, which, though conducted in some quarters with more zeal than discretion in its attitude towards Italy and the Italian Government, at least had a powerful influence in preventing the proposed demolition and rebuilding of the western façade. In support of the movement, which was headed by the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, he spoke and wrote untiringly, not only in London, but in Birmingham and Oxford. The Oxford meeting in the Sheldonian Theatre was the first occasion on which he appeared at his own University in any public capacity. In his ardour he even succeeded in prevailing on Burne-Jones to make there, for the first and last time on record, a speech in public.

When he had been at Venice the year before, he had been too ill to take much apparent pleasure in St. Mark's. But his eye had taken it all in, and the impression it made on him rather grew than weakened as time went on. "Always beautiful," he now wrote of it, "but from the first meant to grow more beautiful by the lapse of time, it has now become a work of art, a monument of history, and a piece of nature. Surely I need not enlarge on the pre-eminence of St. Mark's in all these characters; for no one who even pretends to care about art, history, or nature, would call it in question; but I will assert that, strongly as I may have seemed to express myself, my words but feebly repre-

sent the feelings of a large body of cultivated men who will feel real grief at the loss that seems imminent—a loss which may be slurred over, but which will not be forgotten, and which will be felt ever deeper as cultivation spreads. That the outward aspect of the world should grow uglier day by day in spite of the aspirations of civilization, nay, partly because of its triumphs, is a grievous puzzle to some of us who are not lacking in sympathy for those aspirations and triumphs, artists and craftsmen as we are. So grievous it is that sometimes we are tempted to say, 'Let them make a clean sweep of it all then; let us forget it all and muddle on as best we may, unencumbered with either history or hope!' But such despair is, we well know, a treason to the cause of civilization and the arts, and we do our best to overcome it, and to strengthen ourselves in the belief that even a small minority will at last be listened to and its reasonable opinions be accepted."

He was also a regular visitor and adviser at the South Kensington Museum and at the Royal School of Art Needlework. And alongside of all the rest, he carried on, until the General Election of 1880, vigorous political work in London. In 1879 he was treasurer of the National Liberal League, an association formed to a large extent from the representatives of that working-class London Radicalism which had organized itself in opposition to the Eastern policy of the Government in 1876. At the meetings of this League he made his first essays in the practice of extempore speech. It was a thing which, partly from constitutional shyness and partly from the pressure of thought behind his language, came to him, so far as it did come at all, with great difficulty. "When he spoke off-hand," a colleague of his at this time notes—and the

description is highly characteristic—"he had a knack at times of hammering away at his point until he had said exactly what he wanted to say in exactly the words he wished to use, rocking to and fro the while from one foot to the other."

After the elections of 1880 had replaced a Liberal Government in power, his political partisanship rapidly fell away from him. Like the wave of popular feeling which turned those elections, it had been roused on particular issues, and was kept alive rather by hostility to Lord Beaconsfield's policy than by any great affection for the Cabinet which replaced his. The enthusiasm of 1880 barely lived out the year. The Irish Coercion Bill of 1881 finally destroyed it. In the November following, Morris took an actively joyful part in winding up the affairs of the National Liberal League. The social reforms which he had at heart he saw disappearing amid an ocean of Whiggery, which he no more loved than he did Toryism. "I think some *raison d'être* might be found for us," he wrote in handing over the accounts when he resigned the treasurership, "if we had definite work to do: I do so hate—this in spite of my accounts—everything vague in politics as well as in art." But definite work of the kind he meant was not then in the programme of the Liberal party. Very soon Morris's attitude towards current politics became one of mere irritation and contempt. "Toryism, a system of common robbery, is nevertheless far better than Whiggism—a compound of petty larceny, popular instruction, and receiving of stolen goods": so runs a well-known passage in "The Romany Rye"; and Morris's way of regarding politics had much in common with Borrow's. Gradually but inevitably he became one of a party to whom Canning's famous phrase took a new meaning; and who resolved,

if it were possible, to call a new world into existence, not to redress, but to destroy, that balance of the old in which they saw nothing but a door turning back and forward on its hinges.

But this change took time; and it was gradually wrought out through many doubts and even despondencies.

In the summer of 1880 the long-planned voyage of the whole family from Hammersmith to Kelmscott by water actually took place. Price, William De Morgan, and the Hon. Richard Grosvenor were the remainder of the party. All cares were put aside for it, and the light-heartedness of fifteen years before resumed its sway for a happy week.

"Little things please little minds," he writes on the 10th of August; "therefore my mind must be little, so pleased am I this morning. That is not logic, though I suspect the conclusion to be true: but again I doubt if the 'Ark,' which is veritably the name of our ship, can be considered a little thing, except relatively: item, it is scarcely a little thing that the sky is one sheet of pale warm blue, and that the earth is sucking up the sun rejoicing.

"Jenny and I went out before breakfast to see the craft. She is odd but delightful: imagine a biggish company boat with a small omnibus on board, fitted up luxuriously inside with two shelves and a glass-rack, and a sort of boot behind this: room for two rowers in front, and I must say for not many more except in the cabin or omnibus. Still what joy (to a little mind) to see the landscape out of a square pane of glass, and to sleep a-nights with the stream rushing two inches past one's ear. Then after all, there is the romance of the bank, and outside the boat the world is wide: item, we can always hire a skiff for

some of the party to row in and stretch their muscles, and in that way I propose to start this afternoon about 2½ after dining here.

"Rathbone can't come, being too hard at work after all; so our males will consist of Crom, Dick, and Meorgan" (this was a child's mispronunciation of De Morgan's name) "besides self. Yesterday morning, also a very beautiful one, I had qualms about leaving the garden here, which really, as De Morgan said on Sunday, is a very tolerable substitute for a garden: item, after doing a good deal of small necessary work at Queen Square I had qualms about leaving my business; but to-day I have none—I think I know now why I fatten so."

("I really think," he says, however, in another letter, written when he was in much trouble and worry over public work, "that Falstaff's view of sighing and grief blowing men up like a bladder was a sound medical opinion.")

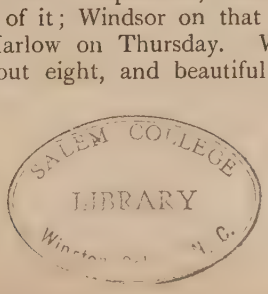
"More and more I think people ought to live in one place—pilgrimages excepted. By the way, I give my third lecture to the Trade Guild of Learning in October; that will be my autumn work, writing it, if I have any quiet time away from home. Also I have promised to lecture next March at the London Institute — subject, the prospects of Architecture in modern civilization. I will be as serious as I can over them, and when I have these two last done, I think of making a book of the lot, as it will be about what I have to say on the subject, which still seems to me the most serious one that a man can think of; for 'tis no less than the chances of a calm, dignified, and therefore happy life for the mass of mankind.

"I shall find my long carpet out of the loom when

I come back—but I am not a bit anxious about it now, the river will wash all that away."

The story of the expedition is continued in a long letter from Kelmscott:

"We came to our first lodging (Sunbury, some six miles above Hampton Court) very late, about half-past ten, and queer it was the next morning to note how different the place was to our imaginations of it in the dark: item, the commonplace inn was a blow to the romance of the river, as you may imagine. Crom and I slept on board the Ark that night; perforce. A cloudy morning when we started, which at first much disappointed me after the splendid evening we had come in by: nevertheless I was in spirits at the idea of getting out of the Cockney waters, and we were scarcely through the lock we had to pass at starting before the sun was out and hot again: the river was nearly new to me really hereabouts and much better than I expected, especially from Chertsey to Staines; it is full of strange character in many places; Laleham, for instance, with its enormous willows and queer suggestions (at any rate) of old houses on the banks: we dined luxuriously on the bank a little below this, and had tea on the grass of Runneymead, which (as I remembered) is a most lovely place; on such an afternoon as one can scarcely hope to see again for brightness and clearness. When we had done tea, it became obvious that we should never get to Maidenhead (as we had intended) that night, so after much spilling of wisdom in a discussion of the kind where no one can see any plan but his own as possible, we agreed to make another day of it; Windsor on that night (Wednesday) and Marlow on Thursday. Well, we got to Windsor about eight, and beautiful it was coming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into; and with all drawbacks even when one saw it next morning seemed a wonderful place: so we only made 17 miles this day. We all slept in the inn on the waterside: that was Wednesday.

"Thursday, Dick took us up to Eton; and again in spite of drawbacks it is yet a glorious place. Once more the morning was grey and even threatening rain (wind N.N.E.), but very soon cleared up again into the brightest of days: a very pleasant morning we had, and dined just above Bray Lock; cook was I, and shut up in the Ark to do the job, appearing like the high-priest at the critical moment pot in hand,—but O the wasps about that osier bed! We got quite used to them at last and by dint of care did not swallow any with our food, nor were stung.

"There was a regatta at Maidenhead and both banks crowded with spectators, so that we had to drop the tow-rope before our time, and as the Ark forged slowly along towards the Berkshire side with your servant steering on her roof, and De Morgan labouring at the sculls, you may think that we were chaffed a little. After Maidenhead you go under Cliefden woods, much admired by the world in general; I confess to thinking them rather artificial; also eyeing Mr. Dick with reference to their owner I couldn't help thinking of Mr. Twemlow and Lord Snigsworthy. But at Cookham Lock how beautiful it was: you get out of the Snigsworthy woods there; the hills fall back from the river, which is very wide there, and you are in the real country, with cows and sheep and farm-houses, the work-a-day world again and not a lacquey's paradise: the country too has plenty of character there, and may even be called beautiful: it was beautiful enough that evening at any rate: the sun had set as we cleared Cookham Lock, and we

went facing the west, which was cloudless and golden, till it got quite dark: by that same dark we had to get through the Marlow Lock, with no little trouble, as we had to skirt a huge weir which roared so that we couldn't hear each other speak, and so to our night's lodging: Crom and I in the Ark close to the roaring weir, Dick and De M. in the inn (a noisy one) and the ladies up town, over the bridge. We took them there, and as we left the little house, looked up the street, and saw the streamers of the Northern Lights flickering all across that part of the sky, just as I saw them in '71 (and not since) in the harbour of Thorshaven: it was very mysterious and almost frightening to see them over the summer leafage so unexpectedly in a place I at least had not seen by daylight.

"So to bed we went, and again in the morning (Friday) a grey day that cleared presently into a very hot one: and once more the river all new to me, and very beautiful: at Hurley Lock we had to wait for a big steamer that plies regularly between Kingston and Oxford with passengers: as I stood up in the lock afterwards I had the surprise of seeing in a long barn-like building two Gothic arches and then a Norman church fitting on to it and joined into a quadrangle by other long roofs: this was Lady Place: once a monastery, then a Jacobean house, and now there is but a farm-house, somewhat gammoned, there: we all went ashore and spent an hour there in great enjoyment, for 'tis a lovely place: there is a huge dove-cot there with carefully moulded buttresses of the 15th century: the church has been miserably gammoned, but kept its old outline.

"I played the cook again a little short of Henley; and we went on again in a burning afternoon through

a river fuller and fuller of character as we got higher up: stuck in the mud for 20 minutes at Wargrave: past Shiplake, which is certainly one of the most beautiful parts of the Thames, and so to Sonning for the night: a village prepensely picturesque and somewhat stuffy that hot night, but really pretty, with a nice inn where Crom was at home, having spent some time there when Boyce was painting on the river: but we scattered all over the village and Crom and I slept in the Ark. We started earlier on Saturday, as we had to get to Wallingford, a longer run than heretofore. We had got well used to the Ark by now, and there was Janey lying down and working quite at home: very hot and waspy it was at dinner, on the bank between Pangbourne and Goring, but when we were well past the last place the afternoon got much clouded over for the first time since our start: but now out of the over-rated half picturesque reach of Streatley and Goring here we were on the Thames that is the Thames, amidst the down-like country and all Cockneydom left far behind, and it *was* jolly.

"We got to stuffy grubby little Wallingford rather early, and got lodging in a riverside pothouse partly and partly in the town. Here it rather tickled me that, an hour or so being to spare before supper, the girls proposed and did a row upon the water as a novel pastime. That was Saturday: well, Sunday morning it had rained in the night, and the look of the dull grey almost drizzling morning made me expect a regular wet day; but it was only dull and cool all day, and we had a very pleasant day of it, and I cooked 'em their dinner just above Culham Lock; we got out at Dorchester to look [at] the Dykes which Sir J. Lubbock has tried to get into the schedule of his

bill and failed; so that the dykes have been partly ploughed over to their hurt: then a bit higher I recognized the place where we stopped for victuals years ago when the Faulkners were with us: and so we got to Oxford a little after nightfall: the banks of the river near the town have been spoilt somewhat since my time; for I have been there but thrice since I was an undergraduate. Well, at Oxford we left the Ark: and Janey the next day (Monday) went on by rail to Kelmscott: while we got up early and by dint of great exertions started from Medley Lock at 9 a.m., with Bossom and another man to tow us as far as New Bridge, where we sent them off, and muddled ourselves home somehow, dining at a lovely place about a mile above New Bridge, where I have stopped twice before for that end. One thing was very pleasant: they were hay-making on the flat flood-washed spits of ground and islets all about Tadpole; and the hay was gathered on punts and the like; odd stuff to look at, mostly sedge, but they told us it was the best of stuff for milk.

"Night fell on us long before we got to Radcot, and we fastened a lantern to the prow of our boat, after we had with much difficulty got our boats through Radcot Bridge. Charles was waiting us with a lantern at our bridge by the corner at 10 p.m., and presently the ancient house had me in its arms again: J. had lighted up all brilliantly, and sweet it all looked you may be sure."

A few days later he writes from London to Mrs. Burne-Jones:

"You may imagine that coming back to this beastly congregation of smoke-dried swindlers and their slaves (whom one hopes one day to make their rebels) under the present circumstances does not make me much

more in love with London, though I must admit to feeling this morning a touch of the 'all by oneself' independence which you wot of as a thing I like: I found by the way De Morgan a complete sympathizer on the subject of London: however let that pass, since in London I am and must be. The few days we passed at Kelmscott made a fine time of it for me; our mornings were grey and dull, though we had several fine afternoons and two lovely evenings. Thursday we went to Fairford in the afternoon, and I was pleased to see the glass and the handsome church once more. Though the country that way is not remarkable, every turn in the road and every by-way set me a-longing to go afoot through the country, never stopping for a day; after all a fine harvest time is the crown of the year in England; there is so much to look at. On the Friday we went to Inglesham and above the Round House, on what might be called the upperest Thames, for half a mile, to look at Inglesham church, a lovely little building about like Kelmscott in size and style, but handsomer and with more old things left in it. Well, we parted on Sunday morning rather melancholy, but had a beautiful voyage to Medley Lock; such an evening, and the best of it at Godstow, where the moon began to show red over Wolvercot.

"So here I am again on the lower Thames, finding it grimy; I have just been busy over my carpeteers; all going pretty well. The 'Orchard' being finished is a fair success as manufacture—lies flat on the whole—and as a work of art has points about it, but I can better it next time."

"I can't pretend," he writes again, when on the point of leaving Kelmscott finally that autumn, "not to feel being out of this house and its surroundings as

a great loss. I have more than ever at my heart the importance for people of living in beautiful places; I mean the sort of beauty which would be attainable by all, if people could but begin to long for it. I do most earnestly desire that something more startling could be done than mere constant private grumbling and occasional public speaking to lift the standard of revolt against the sordidness which people are so stupid as to think necessary."

The river expedition was repeated in the following year. William De Morgan and Faulkner again joined in it. The party also included De Morgan's sister, and two girls, Miss Bessie Macleod and Miss Lisa Stillman, who came full of the high spirits of youth. "On the whole the hazardous experiment of trying the same expedition twice over has succeeded," was Morris's report after it was over. "Our spirits sank somewhat I think as we neared Kelmscott last night; a thing done and over always does that for people, however well it has gone. For my part I didn't so much feel that as the coming in to Oxford. A kind of terror always falls upon me as I near it; indignation at wanton or rash changes mingles curiously in me with all that I remember that I have lost since I was a lad and dwelling there; not the least of losses the recognition that I didn't know in those days what a gain it was to be there. Perhaps if one dreads repeating a pleasure at my time of life it is because it marks too clearly how the time has gone since the last time, and certainly I feel more than one year older since I came up the water in 1880. At any rate the younger part of us have enjoyed themselves thoroughly; and indeed so have I. You know my faith, and how I feel I have no sort of right to revenge myself for any of my private troubles on the kind earth: and here

I feel her kindness very specially and am bound not to meet it with a long face."

With a long face he did not meet it, whatever his private troubles and perplexities might be. "According to my recollection," Mr. William De Morgan says of these voyages, "we none of us stopped laughing all the way. The things that come out prominent in my recollection of the two journeys, just as they come, are: 1. Morris sitting cooking the dinner inside the house-boat with the window closed to keep the wind off the spirit lamp, and ourselves outside looking at him through the glass. 2. The party sitting in a circle at dinner on the riverbank, and Morris starting straight off with an Icelandic or other story which kept us all quiet and well-behaved till washing-up time. 3. Detection and conviction by Morris of the Thames Conservancy, which he was always catching at some new misdemeanour. 4. A battle royal at Henley at the hotel where we put up, about whether Mrs. Harris was or was not an abstraction. It began like this: we played Twenty Questions, and Mrs. Harris was the subject to be guessed—I think by me, as I was sent out of the room while the discussion proceeded how my first question, 'abstract or concrete?' should be answered. I remember being outside the door when the waiter came up from the people in the room underneath to know if anything was the matter. It was a warm discussion; virtually between Charles Faulkner and Morris. Faulkner maintained that Mrs. Harris was just as much a concrete idea as any other character in fiction. Morris repudiated this indignantly, affirming that she wasn't even a character in fiction, as she doesn't occur in the story except as an invention of Mrs. Gamp, who is herself a character in fiction. It is a delicate question: I recollect discussing it after-

wards with Morris in the Merton Abbey days, when I was putting down the foundations of my building there—it was recalled to our minds by the concrete, naturally."

From Kelmscott he wrote on the 4th of September after the second of these voyages: "It has been a great pleasure to see man and maid so hard at work carrying at last. Hobbs began at it on Wednesday morning, and by the next morning the thatchers were putting on the bright straw cap to the new rick: yesterday they were carrying the wheat in the field along our causeway and stacking it in our yard: pretty as one sat in the tapestry-room to see the loads coming on between the stone walls—that was for the other rick though, just beyond the little three-cornered close in front of the house. I am afraid that the last winter has killed us a great many birds here; small ones especially: I don't see the blue tits I look for at this time of the year. I have seen but one moor-hen (yesterday) and was glad to see him, as I feared they were all dead: plenty of rooks however; they have just left off making the parliament-noise they began about six this morning: starlings also, but they haven't begun to gather in our trees yet.

"The other morning as I was coming up the river by our island I heard a great squealing of the swallows, and looking up saw a hawk hanging in the wind overhead, and the swallows gathered in a knot near him: presently two or three swallows left their knot and began skirting Mr. Hawk, and one swept right down on him and fetched him a crack (or seemed to). He considered for a minute or two, then set his wings slant-wise and went down the wind like lightning, and in an instant was hanging over Eaton Hastings: I remember seeing something like this in the flats about the Arun before."

"We went a most formal expedition on Saturday," says a letter of a fortnight later. "By water to Lechlade: then took a trap there and drove to Cirencester, which turned out a pleasant country town, and to us country folk rather splendid and full of shops. There is a grand church there, mostly late Gothic, of the very biggest type of parish church, romantic to the last extent, with its many aisles and chapels: wall-painting there and stained glass and brasses also: and tacked on to it an elaborate house, now the town hall, but built doubtless for lodging the priests who served the many altars in the church. I could have spent a long day there; however, after mooning about the town a bit, we drove off again along the long stretches of the Foss-way (Roman) over a regular down country, the foot-hills of the Cotswolds, pleasant enough, till we came to the valley which the tiny Coln cuts through, where we set ourselves to seeking the Roman villa: said valley very beautiful, the meadows so sweet and wholesome. Two fields were grown all over with the autumn crocus, which I have not seen wild elsewhere in England, though there was plenty of it near Ems. The Roman villa was very interesting, for a show place with a gimcrack *cottage ornée* in front of it, and the place was lovely: we spent our time with the utmost recklessness, so that by then we had had tea at a nice little public by a bridge, and were ready to start down the Coln towards Fairford, it was 6.30, and getting towards twilight. However we saw the first two villages well enough and had some inkling of the others: the scale of everything of the smallest, but so sweet, and unusual even; it was like the background of an innocent fairy story. We didn't know our way till we had reached the last of the Coln villages, and kept asking and knocking at cottage doors

and the like, and it was all very delightful and queer. Our trap put us down at St. John's Bridge, and we trudged thence into Kelmscott, on a night so dark that even Kelmscott lights made a kind of flare in the sky."

It was in the strength of that autumn's stay at Kelmscott, and all the thoughts through which it led him, that he reached a point to which he had not till then attained in width of outlook and depth of insight. An address delivered by him on the 13th of October at the annual meeting of the School of Science and Art connected with the Wedgwood Institute at Burslem, though only published in a locally circulated report, and not at any time very widely known, is both one of the most brilliant and one of the most significant of his published writings. It contains, in a way which none of his other published lectures of that period seem to approach, the sum of all his earlier and the germ of all his later doctrine.

"I myself," he said in that address, "am just fresh from an out-of-the-way part of the country near the end of the navigable Thames, where within a radius of five miles are some half-dozen tiny village churches, every one of which is a beautiful work of art. These are the works of the Thames-side country bumpkins, as you would call us—nothing grander than that. If the same sort of people were to design and build them now, they could not build anything better than the ordinary little plain Nonconformist chapels that one sees scattered about new neighbourhoods. That is what they correspond with, not an architect-designed new Gothic church. The more you study architecture the more certain you will become that I am right in this, and that what we have left us of earlier art was made by the unhelped people. Neither will you fail to see that it was made intelligently and with pleasure.

"That last word brings me to a point so important that, at the risk of getting wearisome, I must add it to my old sentence and repeat the whole. Time was when everybody that made anything made a work of art besides a useful piece of goods, *and it gave them pleasure to make it.* Whatever I doubt, I have no doubt of that.

"I know that in those days life was often rough and evil enough, beset by violence, superstition, ignorance, slavery; yet sorely as poor folks needed a solace, they did not altogether lack one, and that solace was pleasure in their work. Much as the world has won since then, I do not think it has won for all men such perfect happiness that we can afford to cast aside any solace that nature holds forth to us. Or must we for ever be casting out one devil by another? Shall we never make a push to get rid of the whole pack of them at once?

"As I sit at my work at home, which is at Hammersmith, close to the river, I often hear some of that ruffianism go past the window of which a good deal has been said in the papers of late, and has been said before at recurring periods. As I hear the yells and shrieks and all the degradation cast on the glorious tongue of Shakespeare and Milton, as I see the brutal reckless faces and figures go past me, it rouses the recklessness and brutality in me also, and fierce wrath takes possession of me, till I remember, as I hope I mostly do, that it was my good luck only of being born respectable and rich, that has put me on this side of the window among delightful books and lovely works of art, and not on the other side, in the empty street, the drink-steeped liquor-shops, the foul and degraded lodgings. I know by my own feelings and desires what these men want, what would have saved them

from this lowest depth of savagery: employment which would foster their self-respect and win the praise and sympathy of their fellows, and dwellings which they could come to with pleasure, surroundings which would soothe and elevate them; reasonable labour, reasonable rest. There is only one thing that can give them this—art."

Two other passages from the same address are memorable. The first expresses with great lucidity and sympathy the mixture of admiration and impatient despair with which he regarded the work of the Pre-Raphaelite school of painting as it culminated in the art of Burne-Jones.

"The work which is the result of the division of labour, whatever else it can do, cannot produce art: which must, as long as the present system lasts, be entirely confined to such works as are the work from beginning to end of one man—pictures, independent sculpture, and the like. As to these, on the one hand they cannot fill the gap which the loss of popular art has made, nor can they, especially the more imaginative of them, receive the sympathy which should be their due. As things go, it is impossible for any one who is not highly educated to understand the higher kind of pictures. The aspect of this as regards people in general is to my mind much more important than that which has to do with the unlucky artist: but he also has some claim upon our consideration; and I am sure that this lack of the general sympathy of simple people weighs very heavily on him, and makes his work feverish and dreamy, or crabbed and perverse."

The other passage is a piece of straightforward practical advice to designers. In the artist, and therefore in his art, a certain moral quality was before all things essential: the qualities fatal to art were not technical:

they were "vagueness, hypocrisy, and cowardice." And of these three, vagueness was to Morris as immoral, and therefore as inartistic, as either of the other vices.

"Be careful to eschew all vagueness. It is better to be caught out in going wrong when you have had a definite purpose, than to shuffle and slur so that people can't blame you because they don't know what you are at. Hold fast to distinct form in art. Don't think too much of style, but set yourself to get out of you what you think beautiful, and express it, as cautiously as you please, but, I repeat, quite distinctly and without vagueness. Always think your design out in your head before you begin to get it on the paper. Don't begin by slobbering and messing about in the hope that something may come out of it. You must see it before you can draw it, whether the design be of your own invention or nature's. Remember always, form before colour, and outline, silhouette, before modelling, not because these latter are of less importance, but because they can't be right if the first are wrong."

The progress of his mind towards active Socialism during these two years is recorded in the private letters where he set down his thoughts or his beliefs from one day to another with complete transparency. Through many fluctuations of mood one may trace a gradual advance. Some people, even among those who knew him well, thought of his Socialism as a sudden and unaccountable aberration; or at all events fancied it a movement into which he flung himself in a sudden fit of enthusiasm, without having thought the matter out, and acting on a rash impulse. How much this is the reverse of the truth becomes plain when one traces the long struggle, the deep brooding, through which he

arrived at his final attitude, and notes the distaste and reluctance which he often felt for the new movement, which at other moments shone out to him as the hope of the world.

"I am in rather a discouraged mood," he writes in a New Year's letter in 1880, "and the whole thing seems almost too tangled to see through and too heavy to move. Happily though, I am not bound either to see through it or move it but a very little way: meantime I do know what I love and what I hate, and believe that neither the love nor the hatred are matters of accident or whim." Beyond all he seems to have been oppressed by a sense of loneliness in his new thoughts. Any moral support from whatever quarter was hailed by him with touching gratitude. To misconstruction he had long been accustomed. "I have had a life of insults and sucking of my brains," he once said, with no exaggeration of the truth. A man of means and University education who deliberately kept a shop, a poet who chose to exercise a handicraft, not as a gentleman amateur, but under the ordinary conditions of handicraftsmen, was a figure so unique as to be all but unintelligible. Sometimes, though rarely, he turned upon his persecutors. "It is a real joy to find the game afoot," he breaks out a few months later; "that the thing is stirring in other people's minds besides mine, the poetic upholsterer, as Sir Ed. Beckett calls me, meaning (strange to say) an insult by that harmless statement of fact."

In another letter written on the New Year's Day of 1881 he regards the matter with a greater sense of responsibility and a more practical seriousness.

"I have of late been somewhat melancholy (rather too strong a word, but I don't know another), not so much so as not to enjoy life in a way, but just so much

as a man of middle age who has met with rubs (though less than his share of them) may sometimes be allowed to be. When one is just so much subdued one is apt to turn more specially from thinking of one's own affairs to more worthy matters; and my mind is very full of the great change which I hope is slowly coming over the world, and of which surely this new year will be one of the landmarks. Though to me, as I suppose to you, every day begins and ends a year, I was fain to catch hold of ancient custom; nor perhaps will you think it ceremonious or superstitious if I try to join thoughts with you to-day in writing a word of hope for the new year, that it may do a good turn of work toward the abasement of the rich and the raising up of the poor, which is of all things most to be longed for, till people can at last rub out from their dictionaries altogether these dreadful words rich and poor."

Six months later he speaks for the first time clearly of the new day as a thing which (as in the Northern Mythology) can only arrive through some Night of the Gods, and faces the thought that true civilization may have to be reached through the destruction, and not the transformation, of the existing order.

"I suppose you have seen about the sentence on Herr Most and read Coleridge's most dastardly speech to him: just think of the mixture of tyranny and hypocrisy with which the world is governed! These are the sort of things that make thinking people so sick at heart that they are driven from all interest in politics save revolutionary politics: which I must say seems like to be my case. Indeed I have long known, or felt, say, that society in spite of its modern smoothness was founded on injustice and kept together by cowardice and tyranny: but the hope in me has been that matters would mend gradually, till the last struggle,

which must needs be mingled with violence and madness, would be so short as scarcely to count. But I must say matters like this and people's apathy about them shake one's faith in gradual progress.

"As to the Anti-Scrape, I have little comfort there I must say: we have begun too late and our foes are too many; videlicet, almost all people, educated and uneducated. No, as to the buildings themselves, 'tis a lost cause; in fact, the destruction is not far from being complete already. What people really say to themselves is this: I don't like the thing being done, but I can bear it maybe—or certainly, when I come to think of it—and to stir in it is such obvious suffering; so I won't stir. Certainly to take that trouble in any degree it is needful that a man should be touched with a real love of the earth, a worship of it, no less; and I think that as things go, that is seldom felt except by very simple people, and by them, as would be likely, dimly enough. You know the most refined and cultured people, both those of the old religions and these of the new vague ones, have a sort of Manichean hatred of the world (I use the word in its proper sense, the home of man). Such people must be both the enemies of beauty and the slaves of necessity, and true it is that they lead the world at present, and I believe will do till all that is old is gone, and history has become a book from which the pictures have been torn. Now if you ask me why I kick against the pricks in this matter, all I can say is, first because I cannot help it, and secondly because I am encouraged by a sort of faith that something will come of it, some kind of culture of which we know nothing at present."

A month later he writes again:

"How people talk as if there were no wrongs of society against all the poor devils it has driven de-

mented in one way or other! Yet I don't wonder at rich men trembling either: for it does seem as though a rising impatience against the injustice of society was in the air; and no wonder that the craziest heads, that feel this injustice most, breed schemes for setting it all right with a stroke of lightning. There was a curious and thoughtful letter from America in Tuesday night's Echo, the writer of which seemed to have been struck by this thought as to matters over there: quoth he, there is no respect for people in authority there: every one knows that they are there by virtue of a bargain struck by selfishness and selfishness, (I quote his matter only,) and a sort of despair besets people about it. All political change seems to me useful now as making it possible to get the social one: I don't mean to say that I myself make any wide distinction between political and social; I am only using the words in the common way."

And once more three weeks later:

"I don't quite agree with you in condemning grumbling against follies and ills that oppress the world at large, even among friends; for you see it is but now and then that one has a chance of speaking about the thing in public, and meantime one's heart is hot with it, and some expression of it is like to quicken the flame even in those that one loves and respects most, and it is good to feel the air laden with the coming storm even as we go about our daily work or while away time in light matters. To do nothing but grumble and not to act—that is throwing away one's life: but I don't think that words on our cause that we have at heart do nothing but wound the air, even when spoken among friends: 'tis at worst like the music to which men go to battle. Of course if the thing is done egotistically 'tis bad so far; but that

again, how to do it well or ill, is a matter of art like other things."

A matter of art like other things! from this position he strayed far, in the opinion of many of his perplexed friends and jeering opponents, in the years when he was an active worker for the Socialist cause: and certainly the storm-laden air that he began to feel round him was partly at least an atmosphere of his own creation: a mirage, a fool's paradise, it was freely called by those who, if they ever strayed into a fool's paradise of their own, would at all events never be lured towards it by any superflux of sympathy or any ardour of imagination. Yet to look a little deeper, this atmosphere, imagined or created, and created so far as really imagined, is just what art and art alone gives; and it is well to realize that mankind, if they propose to do without such dreams as this, can buy release from them only by the deliberate destruction of art and renunciation of beauty. Whether the result would be worth the price is a remote and rather abstract question; the price is unpayable.

These last letters are from Kelmscott. The return to London had its natural effect of shaping more or less vague broodings into matters of clear visible right and wrong. "As to my 'symptoms' on being pitchforked into the dirt and misery of the Centre of Intelligence," he breaks out on his return, "I must hold my peace about them, I suppose: only in sober earnest I must ask you to believe that they are not wholly selfish; since I could, if I would, more or less escape from this captivity, and would do so if it were not for the cause."

The reference in the use of the word "symptoms" may not be at once obvious. It is explained by another letter written a few months before. He knew

—or if he did not know it was not for want of telling —that discontent with the existing order of things might be traceable to some merely physical cause, some pressure on the brain, some disorder of the liver, some acrid humour in the blood, that poisoned the springs of energy. His own temper was naturally passionate, and his gouty habit, with all which that involves when the subject is gathering up for an illness, did not, of course, tend to make him less irritable. That in spite of this his temper sweetened with years was due to an amount of self-control which it is very easy for natures more phlegmatic or of more perfect physical balance to under-estimate. How sane, how full of ordinary common sense his view of such things was, is illustrated by that other letter, one of his rare excursions into literary criticism. Even here the criticism passes almost at once, and almost insensibly, into the larger sphere of a criticism of life.

"Last night I took me a book and read Carlyle on Mrs. Carlyle, having read his James Carlyle and Jeffrey before. I think I never read anything that dispirited me so much; though read it through one must after having once begun it. What is one to say of such outrageous blues as this? As to what he says about this, that, and the other person now living, I can't see that he gives much offence, I mean to say personally; he is generally very unfair and narrow and whimsical about his likes and dislikes, but 'tis something in these days of hypocrisy that he makes distinctions at all—only one wishes his distinctions were something more than whims. But all that is nothing to the ferocity of his gloom; I confess I had no idea of it till I read the book: and yet I find it difficult to say that it ought not to have been printed, and I am sure it ought not to have been garbled, as some folk think it should.

Only should it not have been called, The history of a great author's liver? Not to mention symptoms too much, I in a small way understand something of that: to look upon your own natural work, which you have chosen out of all the work of the world, with a sick disgust, when you are not at it: to be sore and raw with your friends, distrustful of them, antagonistic to them, when you are not in their company: to want society and to hate it when you've got it:—all these things are just as much a part of the disease as physical squeamishness: but you see, poor chap, he was so always bad that he scarcely had a chance of finding that out. But mind you, I don't believe he didn't enjoy writing his books more or less, even 'Frederick,' the dullest of them and the one he groans over most. After all, my moral from it all is the excellence of art, its truth, and its power of expression. Set 'Sartor Resartus' by all this, and what a difference!

"The story of the old father is touching in spite of its clannishness (which perhaps is not so bad a thing; holds the world together somewhat). He really must have been a good fellow not to have bullied his queer son. Only they wouldn't have been the worse for a touch of definite art up there; even among those beautiful mountains and moors."

But "the cause," a term perhaps specifically used by Morris for the first time in the letter quoted above, was now shaping itself in his mind to something on which the whole of his life both as an artist and as a human being converged: and it was in London, where he saw the misery of the present most acute, that he also discerned, or thought he discerned, some lifting on the horizon, and some glimmer of future hope. To retreat from the pressure of social problems into "a little Palace of Art of one's own" (in the phrase

of five and twenty years back) was now as before possible—was more possible than ever now, when his business as a manufacturer and decorator was firmly established and capable of large expansion. Just at this time he was carrying out decorations on a large scale at St. James's Palace, which included the hanging of the Throne and Reception rooms with specially designed silk damask, the hand-painting of the ceilings and cornices, and the designing of a special paper for hanging the main staircase. This work was, of course, very widely known; and it had attracted not merely additional attention, but additional respect, to the unique quality of his design and workmanship as a decorator. He had only to accept ordinary commercial conditions and use them for what they were worth, to become a wealthy man, who might live where he chose, and surround himself with a sort of barbed wire fence of beautiful objects. This was just what he would not do: nor would he consent to the less distasteful compromise of giving up the conditions of active production to settle down in quietness at his beloved Kelmscott. The actual problem of civilization, as it was focussed and concentrated in the welter of London, drew him towards it with an invincible attraction; and upon senses always acutely open, and a brain that never ceased sounding among the bases of things, there fell with ever increasing urgency the cry of a bewildered and unhappy people—*confusæ sonus urbis et illætabile murmur*.

CHAPTER XIII

MERTON ABBEY

1881

EVER since the days when Red House was to have been made the centre of a little manufacturing community, the idea of transferring the works of the firm to some place out of London had been in Morris's mind; and now not only was his dislike of London greater than ever, but the increasing scale and complexity of the business made migration more practically urgent. Weaving, dyeing and cotton printing, the three new staples of the firm's work, are all industries that require spacious workshops; for dyeing and its subsidiary processes of bleaching, the necessary air and water could only be had out of London for anything beyond mere experimental work. But in nearly every branch of the business there were difficulties involved by want of proper premises. At every hand something essential to the production of the finished goods had to be procured or executed elsewhere: in some cases the raw material could only be laboriously obtained from Yorkshire manufacturers; in others the designs made at Queen Square had to be sent out to manufacturers for execution. In neither case was it possible to secure the same results as when the whole

work was carried out by men trained in Morris's own methods, and working under his own eye. The least that was wanted was a single place in which the business could be so far concentrated that he could dye his own silks and cottons and wools, weave his own carpets and tapestries and brocades, print his own chintzes, and put together his own painted windows. When the separate counting house and show-rooms in Oxford Street were set up, there was no insuperable difficulty in the way of transferring the manufacturing part of the business from Queen Square and Hammersmith to any centre that might be fixed upon.

To transfer the works to the neighbourhood of Kelmscott was an obvious and tempting solution, if the place had not been so remote and so far from a railway. But not many miles off lay that Cotswold country which in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had been one of the principal manufacturing centres of England, and whose prosperity had only given way towards the end of last century before northern water-power and the energy of Yorkshire masters. The slopes and valleys of the Cotswolds, where the Thames and its tributary rivers break from the hills, are still thickly set with little towns that were once thriving seats of commerce, and that still retain in their decay the traces of older opulence. So early as the autumn of 1878 the idea of resuscitating the old local industry in one of these beautiful villages was in Morris's mind. He had gone over from Kelmscott to stay for a few days with Price at Broadway Tower. From Broadway he and Price drove over on the 1st of September to the village of Blockley, near Chipping Campden. The village stands high up in one of the lateral valleys, looking down to the plain along which the Roman Fossway runs on its straight

course northeastward. A stream runs down the little valley and is gathered in ponds to work several mills, once busily employed in turning out silk yarn for the Coventry manufacturers. One after another they had succumbed to altered conditions and the fierce competition of more modern machinery: and now they stood empty. The notices of the last reduction of wages made, before they had to give up the struggle for life altogether, were still pasted on the workshop doors. Morris fell in love with the place. An ideally beautiful landscape; clean air and water in abundance; a railway station within easy distance; skilled workmen still lingering in the half-deserted village, and owners who would have been glad to make easy terms for what was becoming almost unsaleable property, seemed enough to counterbalance the disadvantage of being nearly a hundred miles from London and more remote still from other manufacturing centres. But to the less enthusiastic mind of his manager the risks of the scheme seemed much too great; and at last Morris reluctantly abandoned it. As time went on, too, the feeling grew on him that, as a Londoner, he ought to be loyal to London and do the best by her.

The neighbourhood of London was searched all round. William De Morgan, who was about to set up pottery works for the manufacture of his lustred tiles and majolica, joined in the search, and it was agreed that both factories should be placed together if possible. At the beginning of 1881 the matter became really pressing. "We shall have to take the chintzes ourselves before long," Morris wrote to his wife on the 23rd of February, "and are now really looking about for premises. Edgar went to look at the print-works at Crayford on Monday. They seemed promising:

how queer it would be if we were to set up our work there again. By choice, if 'tis to be had, I had rather get hold of some place on the Colne, say about West Drayton: it would take no longer getting down there, or not so long, as I am to Queen Square now."

On the 3rd of March, "W. De M. is all agog about premises and has just heard of some at Hemel Hempstead near St. Albans. Webb and Wardle are going on Saturday to walk up a stream that runs into Thames at Isleworth."

"I went with De Morgan to Crayford on Monday," he writes to Mrs. Morris again a week later; "the whole country about seems much spoiled since we were there; but Crayford itself less than most places. However, it wouldn't do: though the buildings were big and solid and very cheap: for one thing the time of getting there is unconscionable, over an hour—on the whole it wasn't to be thought of. I saw Hall Place once more and it made the stomach in me turn round with desire of an old house."

The place finally chosen was nearer London than any of these. "On Monday," he writes on the 17th of March, "De M. and I went to look at premises at Merton in Surrey, whereof more hereafter: they seem as if they would do, and if so, and we can get them, then am I for evermore a bird of this world-without-end-for-everlasting hole of a London." The premises were disused print-works, on the high road from London to Epsom, just seven miles from Charing Cross. They had originally been a silk-weaving factory, started early in last century by some of those Huguenot refugees who had settled in large numbers in the neighbouring districts of Wandsworth and Streatham. The river Wandle, clear and beautiful then, and even now but little spoilt, runs through them, turning a

water wheel and supplying water of the special quality required for madder-dyeing. This was one of the prime requisites, and limited the choice of sites materially. "We brought away bottles of water for analysis," Mr. De Morgan says in describing the various searches after the desired factory, "to make sure that it was fit to dye with. I recollect Morris's delight when a certificate was sent from an eminent analyst to the effect that a sample taken from pipes supplying all Lambeth was totally unfit for consumption and could only result in prompt zymotic disease: 'There's your science for you, De Morgan!' said Morris. I explained that if the analyst had known that 250,000 people drank the water daily he would have analyzed it different. This was in Battersea and never came to anything."

The works stood on about seven acres of ground, including a large meadow as well as an orchard and vegetable garden. They were old-fashioned, though still in good repair. The riverside and the mill pond are thickly set with willows and large poplars; behind the dwelling-house a flower garden, then neglected, but soon restored to beauty when it came into Morris's hands, runs down to the water. The workshops, for the most part long wooden two-storied sheds, red-tiled and weather-boarded, are grouped irregularly round the mill lade. Beyond the meadow are the remains of a mediæval wall, the sole remaining fragment of Merton Abbey. Within a stone's throw Nelson had lived with the Hamiltons for the two years which followed the peace of Amiens, until he went out to the Mediterranean as Commander-in-Chief in 1803. But his house had been pulled down many years before. One drawback to the place was its extreme inaccessibility, considering the smallness of the distance, from

Morris's house at Hammersmith, or indeed from almost any part of London. The District Railway was not then extended either to Wimbledon or to Turnham Green. To reach Merton from Kelmscott House Morris had to go by the underground railway from Hammersmith to Farringdon Street, cross the City, and then go down to Merton from Ludgate Hill, a journey that took about two hours. He could, however, stay the night at Merton when there was much to be done. A couple of rooms were fitted up for his private use as at Queen Square: "Papa will have a delightful sort of Quilp establishment there," his daughter wrote when the move was being made.

On the 8th of April he notes that he had "pretty much come to the conclusion" with the owners. But there were the usual delays and hagglings: it was desired to have power to build kilns for tiles and glass, so that covenants with regard to chimneys had to be drawn up: and the lease was only signed on the 7th of June. The next day he went down with Webb, De Morgan, and George Wardle, and the alterations began to be arranged. Morris would not pull down any of the picturesque and prettily-weathered workshops; but roofs had to be heightened to give free space for looms, and foundations trenched and puddled to keep out damp (for at Merton water lies four feet below the surface of the ground), besides the heavy work of furnishing, the building of carpet-looms, the digging and lining of pits for indigo vats, and the general adaptation of both buildings and grounds to their new uses. One of the first things he did when the season allowed was to plant poplars round the meadow on which the grounds of the calico prints were to be cleared by exposure to the air. Meanwhile he was designing for chintzes with extraordinary rapidity and success; a

whole series of these designs, including many of his very best, were turned out during this summer to be ready for the new works to start upon. The move was made at the beginning of winter. His impatience at the inevitable delays was great. "I am in an agony of muddle," he writes early in November; "I now blame myself severely for not having my way and settling at Blockley; I knew I was right; but cowardice prevailed." The agony, Mr. George Wardle tells me, was merely because everything could not move as easily and quickly as he wished. He "could never imagine difficulties," and chose to think that everything would have gone smoothly at Blockley. But before Christmas everything had been cleared out from Queen Square and its annexes, and the new works were fairly set a-going.

A circular issued from Oxford Street when the Merton workshops were in complete order gives a full catalogue of all the kinds of work designed and executed there. The list is as follows:

1. Painted glass windows.
2. Arras tapestry woven in the high-warp loom.
3. Carpets.
4. Embroidery.
5. Tiles.
6 Furniture.
7. General house decorations.
8. Printed cotton goods.
9. Paper hangings.
10. Figured woven stuffs.
11. Furniture velvets and cloths.
12. Upholstery.

Under some of these headings there are notes of a

kind very unlike the usual contents of a manufacturer's catalogue: and the circular may form the text for a brief summary of Morris's methods, and of the personal share he took in the various branches of the work.

In the earlier years of the business Morris had accepted commissions for windows in old as well as new buildings: the most conspicuous instances being the well-known windows in the Latin Chapel at Christ Church, Oxford, and the southern choir-aisle of Salisbury Cathedral. When the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings was founded, he was forced to reconsider the whole question of dealing with old churches more deeply than before; and the conclusions he drew with regard to the practice of restoration obliged him to take up a very stringent attitude when there was any question of alterations to an ancient building. As regards windows in particular, the casuistry of the matter is exceptionally delicate. "We are prepared as heretofore," Morris wrote in this circular, "to give estimates for windows in churches and other buildings, *except in the case of such as can be considered monuments of Ancient Art,* the glazing of which we cannot conscientiously undertake, as our doing so would seem to sanction the disastrous practice of so-called Restoration." The double ambiguity of the words in which the exception is couched is easily apparent. Even rules laid down with the utmost stringency must in some cases leave room for ambiguities and evasions, and the final decision will fall on the instinct of the artist. But Morris's principles prescribed that in all cases where there was any doubt, an existing building, or any part of an existing building, whether in strict terms a monument of ancient art or not, should be let alone. In most cases there

was none. When Dean Stanley asked him to execute a window for Westminster Abbey, and upon his refusal, cited the Vyner window in Christ Church as a precedent, Morris replied that even that window, the excellence of which as a piece of modern work he did not affect to deny, was an intruder where it stood, and alien in character and sentiment from the building in which it was placed.

On the announcement now made and on Morris's own practice under it, Mr Wardle makes some interesting remarks. "Its object was ill understood," he says, "and moreover so little liked, that we found it necessary to repeat orally and with asseverations our firm intention to abide by it, and at the back of this, to get it believed that we had not given up glass-painting altogether. For a year or two certainly our business suffered from the rumour, not wanting in echoes, that Mr. Morris had given up glass-painting; and we had to make many advertisements to the contrary."

"In the minds of most people," Mr. Wardle goes on, and here he touches the real truth of the matter, "who took any interest at all in Mr. Morris's work, the *raison d'être* of 'Morris glass' was its so-called mediævalism, and it was supposed nothing could be more suitable for an ancient building. The profound misconception which this opinion implied, and the other hopeless mistake which assumed that Mr. Morris's work was purposely 'mediæval,' made it impossible that the circular could be understood.

"The grounds of Mr. Morris's protest were two. The first was the obvious material damage ancient buildings suffer by the process of removing existing glass from the windows and the insertion of new. We had ourselves several frightful experiences, though we used

every precaution in our power: how much damage has been done where no such care was taken, and where it was not even suspected that the original tracery and framing of a window was of any peculiar value! It was not uncommon, when a painted window was offered to an old church, that as part of the improvement new tracery and mullions were also decided on. Even when it was intended to preserve the old stonework, it was almost inevitable that some part of it would fall when the support of the ancient glass with its saddle-bars and stanchions was removed: and new stonework would then have to be prepared hastily. Even if all went well, which would be a large concession—for there was always the cutting of the old stonework for the new saddle-bars, the hammering, and the vibration, most dangerous to old masonry—there was the final blotting out of the entire window by the wire guards. These guards are almost equivalent to the abolition of the windows as part of the external architecture, since they hide much of the thickness of the masonry and all the refinements of the mouldings and tracery."

The other ground was that laid down with a firm hand by Morris himself in the original statement of the objects of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, and continually impressed and re-impressed by him with tongue and pen whenever he dealt with the subject of ancient art: the essential dishonesty of any process which professed to be "restoration" of the old building; and the essential futility of anything which undertook to replace an original by a copy even when there was not the dishonest purpose of making the copy indistinguishable from the original.

"Never," Mr. Wardle justly adds—and the remark, of course, applies with equal force to the share which

Burne-Jones, first as principal and afterwards as sole figure-designer, had in Morris windows—"let people say what they will about the suitability of Mr. Morris's glass to mediæval buildings, do the old and the new rightly harmonize. This last opinion very few were able to adopt, for so few recognized the real originality and modernness of his art. It was supposed to be mediæval. In popular estimation design necessarily takes one of several recognized forms which are called styles, and as his design had many of the characters of mediæval work, he was supposed to be intentionally imitating that style. On the contrary, Mr. Morris was too unaffected, and in the broadest sense natural, in his art to allow himself to imitate, and as he did not intentionally make his work mediæval, he did not pretend that it could be suitable for a mediæval building."

This, then, was Morris's theory, expressed in its rigour. In accordance with it he laid down a self-denying ordinance with regard to supplying painted windows for ancient buildings—self-denying doubly, because not only did this resolution, as has been noted above, injure, and for a time partly cripple, this branch of the business, but because the result in three cases out of four was simply that the owners, or guardians, of the mediæval building went somewhere else; and the window was filled with glass as much inferior to his in colour and design as it was more alien from the spirit of the Middle Ages, not least so when it was inspired by an insincere and pretentious mediævalism.

By abstaining himself, however, he hoped to set an example that others might gradually follow; and perhaps his action has not been wholly without effect. In a few instances he allowed exceptions: among

these may be mentioned the five beautiful windows executed by him for the chancel of St. Margaret's, Rottingdean, at the special request of Burne-Jones. In that case the windows were plain lancets filled with modern glass, some of it unpainted, the rest admittedly and unrelievedly hideous. There was no tracery to injure, and no existing ancient glass to suffer from the juxtaposition of the new.

As regards the personal part which Morris took in this branch of the firm's work, it was the invariable practice in early years, and remained the rule after the Merton Abbey works were started, that the interpretation of the design and the choice of the glass came under his own eye. He seldom at any time, and never in more recent years, made complete designs for windows himself. From the first, the figure-subjects were mainly supplied by those of his colleagues who were professional painters. As time went on, they came almost exclusively from the studio of Burne-Jones, who supplied no cartoons for glass except to the firm. But backgrounds and foliage were, as a rule, of Morris's designing, the animals and certain kinds of ornament being often drawn by Webb.

Morris never made his own glass. He often regretted that he did not; but for organizing this manufacture, time and money alike were required beyond what he could spare. There is little doubt that in the colouring of glass, as in that of yarns, his personal touch would have produced greater splendours of tone than could be got by other workers. As it was, his faultless eye for colour had to content itself with doing its best out of the glass supplied by the ordinary manufacturers. If the colour of a Morris window is to the present day unmistakable among all rivals or imitations, this is not from any difference in material,

but from the skill in selection and variation which was an instinct in Morris himself, and which to some considerable degree he transmitted to his workmen.

When the cartoons for a window had been drawn, Mr. Wardle notes in speaking of the practice of this period, Morris personally "coloured" the window; that is to say, he dictated in detail to Campfield, the foreman of the painters, what glass was to be used for each part. The various parts were then distributed to the painters, whose work he watched as it went on, though he usually reserved any comments till the painter had done all that he could. Retouches were then made by his direction, and the glass was burned and leaded up. When this was done, there came the final review of the window, a work of great difficulty in any case, and to any ordinary eye impossible in the cramped premises in Queen Square, where some of his largest windows were made. But here his amazing eye and memory for colour enabled him to achieve the impossible: he could pass all the parts of a large window one by one before the light, and never lose sight of the general tone of the colour or of the relation of one part to another. If any part did not satisfy him, new glass was cut and that piece of the window done again.

The painting of tiles, which had been one of the first occupations of the firm in Red Lion Square, had by this time almost ceased. It had ceased wholly as regards figure-painted tiles, of which a few sets of great beauty, some of them with verses by Morris also painted on them, had been made for a few years and not in great numbers. Pattern tiles, chiefly meant for use in fireplaces, went on being produced—as they still are—to a limited extent from the early designs. They were all hand-painted, even when the designs were very

simple, the touch of the brush being essential towards giving that quality of pattern and surface that made them coherent with the larger decoration of which they formed a part. The manufacture of tiles on a larger scale and with properly constructed kilns had been taken up by De Morgan as a branch of pottery, and it was not necessary that Morris should continue to make his own. Since the premises in Queen Square were abandoned, the firing of both glass and tiles has been executed elsewhere, no kilns having been built at Merton. The premises which De Morgan took in order to establish potteries close to the Merton Abbey works did not prove suitable to their purpose, and the plan of joint, or even contiguous, factories never fully took effect: but he afterwards set up works in Chelsea from which tiles were supplied well suited to take their place among Morris decorations. It may be added that, while the firm never either designed or made pottery of any kind—the tiles used for painting on being got from outside, chiefly from Holland—they did something towards introducing in England the knowledge of some of the best varieties of foreign manufacture, especially the simple and beautiful Grès de Flandre ware, now so common in the shops of London furnishers, which made its first appearance in England, except as a curiosity, in Morris's show-room. Neither did the production of furniture play any important part in the firm's business. There were generally a few pieces, nearly all from Webb's designs, being made; but Morris never designed any himself: it was only when some piece, such as a chest or cupboard, was to be further adorned with gilding or painting, that it came into his hands. Of all the specific minor improvements in common household objects due to Morris, the rush-bottomed Sussex chair perhaps takes the first

place. It was not his own invention, but was copied, with trifling improvements, from an old chair of village manufacture picked up in Sussex by Mr. Warrington Taylor. With or without modification it has been taken up by all the modern furniture manufacturers, and is in almost universal use. But the Morris pattern of the later type (there were two) still excels all others in simplicity and elegance of proportion.

The beginnings of the important industry of carpet-weaving have already been recounted. Looms had already been built at Hammersmith for weaving carpets of considerable size, as much as twelve feet across. The great loom at the Merton works is built for making a carpet of no less than twenty-five feet in breadth. The designing of these carpets was wholly, or almost wholly, done by Morris himself. His practice was first to make a drawing on the scale of about one-eighth of the full size, which he coloured very carefully with his own hand. A draughtsman enlarged this coloured drawing on the "point paper"—paper, that is, divided into minute spaces, each representing a single knot of the carpet. The pointing on this paper, a work of immense laboriousness, was done by Morris himself until he gradually trained other workmen to do it with the accurate judgment which makes all the difference between the right and wrong expression of the design. The same laborious work was undertaken by him in the designing of silk damasks, woven tapestries, and all the patterned woven stuffs produced on his looms.

Beyond the preliminary tasks of designing and pointing, the actual work at the loom performed by Morris remained for some years very great: and it became still greater when he set aside the carpet-loom for the tapestry-loom, upon which he revived the

splendid and almost extinct art of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In a diary of his daily occupations which he kept in the year of the removal to Merton, the entries of morning work at the tapestry-loom are continual. As early in the year as the 12th of March he puts down "up at 7.30, about four hours tapestry": a week later, "up at 6½, four hours tapestry"; and as the mornings lengthened in April, "up at 6, two hours tapestry," "up at 5.30, three hours tapestry." All through the summer the entries go on: he was seldom up later than six o'clock for several months, and would be at the loom within ten minutes. One day, at the end of May, "wind W.S.W., very fine bright day, cool in evening" (for if Morris kept any diary at all, however scanty, the weather was always the first thing noted in it), the entry is "Up at 5: 3½ hours tapestry. To Grange. To Queen Square: The green for Peacock" (a woven hanging) "all wrong. Did day books and Friday" (the summing up of the week's business and signing cheques) "besides seeing to this took away model of G. H. carpet from K. Meeting St. Mark's Committee. Dined A. Ionides." And this was hardly an exceptional day, so crowded was his life with occupation.

The carpet he was making for Mr. George Howard, for the drawing-room at Naworth Castle, which is mentioned in this extract, was by far the largest that he had then executed. It was nearly a year in hand, and the hours he spent in designing and pointing it make up the equivalent of a substantial day's work for a full month. The result of a piece of work of this size and intricacy remained an unknown quantity till the end. "Your carpet has been finished," he wrote to Mr. Howard on the 3rd of November, "for a week or two: I have been keeping it back to try

for a fine day to spread it on our lawn, so that I might see it all at once: at present I have only been able to see it piecemeal. So seen, it looks very well, I think, and seems to be satisfactory as to manufacture. What are your orders about it? as I shall have to send some one down to Naworth to get it into its place: it weighs about a ton I fancy."

The manufacture of Arras tapestry, on which Morris had been experimenting at Hammersmith throughout the year, was only fairly begun after the works were removed to Merton. The first piece made there was a frieze of greenery with birds, which, like the carpet of the previous year, went to Naworth. In reviving this noble art he had nothing in England to guide him, as to the mechanical part of the work, beyond drawings of looms in old books. To see what the mechanism was really like, he had to pay a visit to the Gobelins, where he found the ancient loom still in use, though sunk to the servile task of making copies of oil paintings. The low-warp loom, which had replaced it elsewhere, he at once dismissed as useless for his purpose. In it the task of the weaver is confined to copying the imperfectly seen cartoon stretched under the warp, at which he peers between the threads. The work is almost purely mechanical; the face of the tapestry being below, and the weaving done from the back, the workman has no means of knowing what effect he is producing, and can only trust to a rigid method. The making of tapestry on the high-warp loom approximates in method to the painting of a picture; the artificer produces his form and colour, stitch by stitch, by the exercise of his own intelligence, and sees, in his little swinging mirror, the actual surface forming itself insensibly under his hand, as if it were a picture on the easel.

When months of daily practice had familiarized Morris himself with the processes and difficulties of tapestry-weaving, the next thing was to teach the art to other workmen. The work is of a kind which experience proves to be best done by boys. It involves little muscular effort, and is best carried on by small flexible fingers. In this as in the preliminary work Morris was aided throughout by J. H. Dearle, then a young assistant, who afterwards became manager of the Merton works and a partner in the firm. "Dearle got on so well," Mr. George Wardle tells me, "that very soon we took in two other boys, Sleath and Knight, as his apprentices. When we moved to Merton therefore we had already three 'hands' fairly competent in this art." The tapestry of the Goose-Girl, designed by Mr. Walter Crane, was the first large figure-piece executed there. Dearle did the faces himself, and the rest was mainly carried out by the two boys.

"At Merton" Mr. Wardle adds, "the boys, who were still young, lived in the house. We gave them board and lodging and a certain weekly stipend. It is worth while to note that there was no sort of selection of these boys, or of any others who were brought up by us to one or other branch of Mr. Morris's business. John Smith, who is now the dyer at Merton, was taken into the dye-shop because it was just being set up at the time he was getting too old to remain errand boy. Others were put to the loom because at the time we were starting this we were asked to do something for them. We took Sleath on that ground first of all, and he introduced Knight. The same rule applied to all others, and its working justified Mr. Morris's contention that the universal

modern system, which he called that of Devil take the hindmost, is frightfully wasteful of human intelligence. A few years later, when we were able to set up a third tapestry-loom, we found a lad with equal facility, without selection of any kind, the nephew of the housekeeper at Merton. She happened to tell me, at the time we were getting the new loom ready, that her nephew had left school and was looking for something to do."

This system of setting the nearest person to do whatever kind of work wanted doing was really of the essence of Morris's method as a manufacturer from the beginning; and in his hands it produced surprisingly good results. How it would have worked, whether indeed it would have worked at all, with a man of less genius at the head of the work as a directing and propelling force, is of course a different question. But, as Morris always insisted, it would have worked just as well, and with much greater certainty, if instead of the solitary man of genius at the head of the work, there had been a living inherited tradition throughout the workshop. The skilled workman is not as a rule a workman who possesses any remarkable innate skill of hand. He is one rather whose general intelligence has protected him against that excessive division of labour which cramps and sterilizes the modern artificer. If a rational latitude were given to manual work of the individual under proper guidance, it might well be that the average skill of hand and eye, stimulated and not repressed by its daily labour, would of its own self rise to a level which at present is only reached in isolated instances. On this point the evidence given by Morris himself in March, 1882, before the Royal Commission on Technical Instruction, indicates his

view with great clearness and precision. "I often have great difficulty," he said, "in dealing with the workmen I employ in London, because of their *general ignorance.*" This general ignorance was just what had to be met by general education, not by specific technical instruction. But drawing, as at the basis of all manual arts whatever, he held to be an essential element in general education which should be worthy of the name. "I think undoubtedly everybody ought to be taught to draw just as much as everybody ought to be taught to read and write."

The principle thus laid down was accepted by the Government eight years later, when by the Code of 1890 drawing was made a compulsory subject in elementary schools for boys. The step thus taken was even then somewhat in advance of public opinion. That children should all be taught to read and write has now so long been the law that it is accepted somewhat as a matter of course, and protests against it are few and faint. But the doctrine that drawing is just as essential a part of any real education is still regarded in many quarters as a foolish, or at best an interesting paradox; and such instruction in drawing as can be given, in an hour and a half during each week, to children who are allowed to leave school at the age of eleven, is still accepted as the measure of the State's duty.

The divorce between the theory and practice of all the manual arts was a matter against which Morris was always emphatic in his protest. He co-operated loyally in the work done in the teaching of design by the Schools of Art directed from South Kensington. Since 1876, when he first acted as an Examiner to the Art Department, he served year after year until

the last year of his life. The work was not interesting to him; it is arduous while it lasts, and the looking over large masses of thoroughly mediocre work was a severe trial to his patience. But he stuck to it for the sake of the good that might ultimately come of it; and in the latter years of his life he had the satisfaction of seeing, in London and elsewhere, noticeably at Birmingham, a real school of manual art slowly form itself whose work was directly aimed at practice.

One secret of the excellence of Morris's own designs was that he never designed anything which he did not know how to produce with his own hands. He had mastered the practical arts of dyeing and weaving before he began to produce designs for dyed and woven stuffs to be made in his workshops. "It is a thing to be deprecated," he says in his evidence before the Royal Commission, "that there should be a class of mere artists who furnish designs ready-made to what you may call the technical designers. I think it is desirable that the artist and what is technically called the designer should practically be one." But this is not all. "A designer ought to be able to weave himself. A man employs a designer to draw his patterns. One of two things happens: either the designer has learnt the method of execution in a totally perfunctory manner, and takes no interest in it, but goes only by a certain set of rules, and is therefore cramped and made dull and stupid by going by them: or on the other hand if, as sometimes happens, the manufacturer goes to a more dignified kind of artist, who, knowing nothing of the way in which the thing has to be done, produces a kind of puzzle for the manufacturer, the manufacturer having paid for it takes it away and does what he can with it, chops the

design up and adapts it to his purpose as well as he can; the design is spoilt, and when executed looks not better but worse than the ordinary cut and dried trade design."

"Of late years," he stated in the same evidence, "there has arisen in London a great number of half professional designers, people who would be glad to get work in designing. These people are generally very uneducated in the technique of the arts they design for, which is a great drawback."

Between the workman who had no understanding of design and the designer who had no understanding of execution, the case of the manual arts was hopeless indeed. In both cases alike the root of the evil was sheer ignorance; and this ignorance was directly due to want, in one case as much as the other, of proper education; as that again was due to the false division of labour—the disintegration of labour, as it should more properly be called—which forbade artist and workman alike to know what they were at.

Thus stated the case seems simple enough. But the simplest truths are often the last to be applied to practice. The doctrines laid down by Morris before the Commission were then startling and almost revolutionary; even now but little progress has been made in carrying them out, though their abstract truth is generally admitted. There is a school of designers now, for the most part formed under the influence of Morris's teaching, who design with direct knowledge of the manufacturing processes. But the encouragement given by the State to the art of designing still takes the form of prizes for designs in the air. "Not enough attention is given," Morris said in his evidence, "to the turning out of the actual goods themselves. We cannot give prizes for the things turned out, we

can only give prizes for the designs. I think it would be a very good thing to give prizes for the goods themselves." The dislocation between the two sides of the craftsman's education is still so great that this step is thought impossible.

This had been his own experience when he first tried to have carpets made from his own designs by the ordinary manufacturers. He began with the simplest kind, the so-called Kidderminster, a carpet of not more than three colours, in which the pattern is produced by the intersection at fixed points of webs interlaced by the passage of the shuttle through a double or triple-tiered warp. In the trial piece of carpet sent, the design was almost unrecognizable. A suspicion at first crossed his mind that he was being played with: and that the manufacturer, who had frankly said on seeing the design that it was too simple and would not do, had determined to justify his opinion by spoiling it in the manufacture. But this was not the case; he had acted in perfect good faith, and when Morris said to him, "But this is not my pattern," could only answer, "This is how your pattern comes out." Finally an interview was arranged with his "designer," the man who set out the pattern on point paper for the weavers. The root of all the trouble was then found out in five minutes: it was merely this, that the designer could not draw. The pattern was redrawn on point paper in Morris's own workshop, and the carpet (which has become an established pattern and is still the most successful of all the woven carpets produced from Morris's designs) was satisfactorily produced forthwith.

Of Morris's personal share in the firm's work in general decoration and the application of the materials produced by him to their specific purpose, some idea

may be formed from fragments of his correspondence about this time with Mr. and Mrs. George Howard. Their house in Palace Green had been recently built by Webb, and was being decorated throughout by Morris. The decoration of the dining-room was unusually careful and elaborate, as it was designed as a setting for a series of paintings on panel by Burne-Jones of the story of Cupid and Psyche.

To Mrs. Howard he writes on the 13th of December, 1879:

"Ned Jones and I went to look at the effect of the gold paper against the picture, and found to our grief that it would not do: yesterday I went there to meet him that we might try something else, but the morning was so bad that he could not come out: this morning I find that you suggest leaving the matter till you come up to town: but meanwhile, I, knowing that it would be impossible to get the work done unless we began at once, have set Leach's men at work to forward the job, so that the drawing-room will be finished next week in the way you wished; and the boudoir has been prepared for final painting and hanging, which would now take less than a week to do at any time: Ned and I are going to look at the room again on Sunday, so that I shall be able to report again on Monday, so that if you agreed to our suggestions there would still be time to finish the room before you get back. I hope I have not done wrong in setting Leach to work: if I have, I must plead the usual excuse of fools, that I have acted for the best.

"Dining-room.—I am bound to ask your pardon for having neglected this job; but I did not quite understand what was to be done except the writing (which by the way is a very difficult business): I am now going to set to work to design ornaments for the

mouldings round the pictures, the curved braces of ceiling, and the upper part of the panelling. I fear there is little chance of getting any of this done before your return (I mean executed on the wood-work) but I will do my best to get everything in train to start it on the first opportunity: meantime I have thought it best to tell Leach's man to varnish only the lower part of the panelling, doors, shutters, etc., where the ornament will not come."

And again two days later:

"Ned and I duly went to Palace Green yesterday and our joint conclusion was that the best hanging for the walls of the boudoir would be the inclosed madder-printed cotton: it brings out the greys of the picture better than anything else: also I think it would make a pretty room with the wood-work painted a light blue-green colour like a starling's egg; and if you wanted drapery about it, we have beautiful stuffs of shades of red that would brighten all up without fighting with the wall-hangings: if you could like this and would let me know some day this week, I could get all finished against you come home, but if you still have doubts we would leave the room in a forward state for finishing. To complete the business part of my letter I may as well give you the price of the red stuff: two shillings per yard, yard-wide, which would come to less than the gold sunflower would have done."

The decoration of the house was only completed very gradually. Nearly two years later there is another series of letters to Mrs. Howard:

"Thank you for asking me personally about the patterns: I have been to Oxford Street to-day and told Smith to send off all our patterns that would be of any use to you; I have told him to write 'recommended' and 'specially recommended' on certain of

them. As to the papers (sunflower and acorn), I will do what I can to soften the colour.

"May I ask what you are going to do about the drawing-room at Palace Green? Ned tells me that you are going to keep the *Dies Domini* there, and want to hang the room accordingly: we don't like to do anything there till the ceiling is made safe: what do you think of hanging a piece of stuff behind it? I could get the colour better suited to it so, I believe.

"Ned has been doing a great deal to the dining-room pictures and very much improving them: so that the room will be light and pleasant after all, and the pictures very beautiful.

"As to the red dove and rose, for a curtain, it will last as long as need be, since the cloth is really very strong: I can't answer so decidedly as to the colour; but the colours in it when looked at by themselves you will find rather full than not, 'tis the mixture that makes them look delicate: therefore I believe the stuff to be quite safe to use if you fancy it: of course I don't mean to say that any flat-woven stuff can stand sunlight as well as a piled material, and the velvet also is darker, though not so well dyed as the other stuff.

"As to the other version of the dove and rose, if 'tis a smaller sized pattern in green and yellow, you can use it without hesitation; but if it be of the same size as the red, I should scarcely advise it, if the settees are to have heavy wear: you see we made this stuff for curtains and hangings: I have tried a piece of the purple, turquoise, and yellow as a cushion on a chair of my own on which everybody sits: it has worn better than I expected, but still not like stuff made for it would do. As to the red silk for curtains, what I am doing (for St. James's) is a very fine colour; but

also you must not forget that I can do pretty well any colour you want, and of sober reds the resources are great. Item, I can do the most ravishing yellows, rather what people call amber: what would you say to dullish pink shot with amber; like some of those chrysanthemums we see just now? I am going to try that after Christmas.

"The gold and red sunflower is on my board at Queen Square and I will do my best to hit the due colour."

Two letters written about the same time to Mr. Howard, about defects in some painted glass previously executed by Morris for Naworth, are interesting alike as showing the difficulties of working in untested material, and the pride he took in the excellence of his own work.

"'Tis all too true about the Naworth windows: we (and I believe all other glass-painters) were beguiled by an untrustworthy colour, having borax in it, some years ago; and the windows painted with this are going all over the country. Of course we have taken warning, and our work will now be all right. We have given instructions to our man to take out the faulty glass, which we will—restore!—at once, and pay for that same ourselves—worse luck!"

"Borax is the name of the culprit: the colour-makers, finding that the glass-painters wanted a colour that would burn well at a lowish temperature, mixed borax with it, to that end; but unluckily glass of borax is soluble in water, and hence the tears wept by our windows—and our purses. We use harder colour now, so that if any window of ours goes now it must be from other causes; bad burning or the like; I don't think as things go that this is like to happen to us.

"I am very glad indeed that you think the east window a success; I was very nervous about it, as the cartoons were so good that I should have been quite upset if I had not done them something like justice."

But perhaps the most important new development that the business took after it was moved to Merton Abbey was the production of printed cotton goods, the celebrated "Morris chintzes," which soon became more widely known and more largely used than his woven stuffs or wall-papers. Their success was so great that deliberate or unconscious imitations of them soon began to be produced by the manufacturers and find a ready market. Their adaptability to many small purposes gave them an advantage over the paper-hangings and tapestries. To hang a room with good hand-printed paper is a matter of serious expense to many people who would like to do it, but who do not very acutely realize the difference between it and a machine-printed paper that can be produced for one-sixth and bought for one-third of the price. But a mere scrap of these bright and beautifully patterned chintzes can be used to light up a room, as a curtain, or the cover of a chair or a cushion, or in twenty other ways; and perhaps the primary use for which these fabrics were meant, that of wall-hangings, is the one to which they have been most seldom applied. Paper-hangings are so much taken for granted as the covering of the walls of rich and poor houses alike, that people rarely pause to consider their many disadvantages. The simpler patterns of his chintzes Morris was able to produce at a price little higher than that of moderately costly wall-papers; their decorative effect in a room is perhaps tenfold that of the papers; and yet his appeal to use them for the purpose for which they

were meant fell on the public in vain. People dressed themselves in his wall-hangings, covered books with them, did this or that with them according to their fancy; but hang walls with them they would not.

Between seventy and eighty designs in wall-papers, and nearly forty in chintzes, were invented by Morris and carried out under his eye in the course of his business life. These numbers do not take account of the variant designs where a different scheme of colours is applied to the same pattern. If these be counted separately, the total number of designs from his own hands amounts to four hundred. In all of them the drawing and the choice of colours were alike his own individual work. The cutting of the blocks was done by workmen; but the cutter's tracing was always submitted to Morris for retouching before it was rubbed off on the wood; and he kept till late years a vigilant eye both on his own dye-vats and on the colour-pots of the paper-makers. It may give some idea of the prodigious mass of his work as a designer to add that the sum total of his designs for paper-hangings, chintzes, woven stuffs, silk damasks, stamped velvets, carpets, and tapestries (excluding the hand-made carpets and the Arras tapestries, which were each specially designed, and as a rule not duplicated) which were actually carried out, amounts to little short of six hundred, besides countless designs for embroidery.

"Of the work at Merton," Mr. Wardle says, looking back on it perhaps through something of that enchantment that is lent by distance, "there seems nothing to say except that it was altogether delightful." It went on in the ordered tranquillity of spacious and even beautiful surroundings. There were pure water, light, and air in abundance; and the change

from the cramped quarters and grimy atmosphere of Bloomsbury reacted on the master's own temper. "It is noticeable," says Mr. Wardle, "in remembering his nervous temperament, that at Merton, though he disliked the journey by rail intensely, he showed no irritation on arriving. There remained a certain impetus in his manner, as if he would still go at twenty miles an hour and rather expected everything to keep pace with him." It was not in his workshops alone that he seemed to expect this, nor was it in his workshops that the expectation was oftenest disappointed.

But indeed even to the present day, as one turns out of the dusty high road and passes through the manager's little house, the world seems left in a moment behind. The old-fashioned garden is gay with irises and daffodils in spring, with hollyhocks and sunflowers in autumn, and full, summer by summer, of the fragrant flowering shrubs that make a London suburb into a brief June Paradise. It rambles away towards the mill pond with its fringe of tall poplars; the cottons lie bleaching on grass thickly set with buttercups; the low long buildings with the clear rushing little stream running between them, and the wooden outside staircases leading to their upper story, have nothing about them to suggest the modern factory; even upon the great sunk dye-vats the sun flickers through leaves, and trout leap outside the windows of the long cheerful room where the carpet-looms are built. "To Merton Abbey," runs an entry in a visitor's diary on a day at the end of April, 1882, when the new works had settled fairly down to their routine: "white hawthorn was out in the garden: we had tea with Mr. Morris in his room in the house, and left laden with marsh-marigolds, wallflowers, lilac,

and hawthorn." Of these flowers, and of others in their seasons, Morris often used to bring back bunches to London with him, and wonder why any one should be laughed at—as in London one then still was—for carrying flowers.

Nor did it prove to be the case that these humanized conditions, these pleasant surroundings of the work carried on at Merton Abbey, were in any way fatal to the success of the business as a matter of ordinary commerce. It was not from any disastrous experience of his own that Morris was led to despair of the existing order of things. In the most striking passage of his evidence before the Technical Instruction Commission he speaks of the prospects of art in a spirit of confidence and even of cheerfulness. "On the whole," he said, in words which must have been at the time quite sincere—for irony was a figure which he never used—"one must suppose that beauty is a marketable quality, and that the better the work is all round both as a work of art and in its technique, the more likely it is to find favour with the public." And the use of technical education was not, to his mind, to train a select caste of skilled designers and workers, but one more broadly and indeed quite universally applicable: "that the public should know something about it, so that you may get a market for excellence."

This market for excellence he conquered himself, partly by the mere force of his genius, and partly by real business ability. He approached matters of business in so peculiar a spirit, that the question whether he was really a good business man or not was often debated, and is still debateable. Some of the qualities which go to make up that character he undoubtedly possessed in a high measure: above all perhaps, a certain indefinable driving power—a quality as rare as

it is valuable—which was quite distinct from his own energy or industry, and which hardly ever failed to affect those with whom he came into personal contact. In his immediate subordinates—Mr. George Wardle first, and the Messrs. Smith afterwards—he was fortunate in finding men who caught this energy from him and yet retained with it a full measure of shrewdness and caution. But such good fortune, according to the Greek proverb so often quoted by Aristotle, is in itself nearly akin to skill; and the choice of a good manager is in effect good management.

But for the ordinary processes of competitive commerce, and this as much before as after he adopted any distinctively Socialistic views, his qualities, whether intellectual or emotional, were not such as are calculated to lead to conspicuous success. The truth is that commercial success is an art which must be seriously pursued, and which he, quite apart from any question of morality, was at once too imaginative, too soft-hearted, and too much engrossed by wholly different interests, to pursue seriously. He carried on his business as a manufacturer not because he wished to make money, but because he wished to make the things he manufactured. The art of commerce as it consists in buying material and labour cheaply, and forcing the largest possible sale of the product, was one for which he had little aptitude and less liking. In every manual art which he touched, he was a skilled expert: in the art of money-making he remained to the last an amateur. Throughout he regarded material with the eye of the artist, and labour with the eye of a fellow-labourer. He never grudged or haggled over the price of anything which he thought really excellent of its kind and really desirable for him to have; he would dye with kermes instead of cochineal if he

could gain an almost imperceptible richness of tone by doing so; he would condemn piece after piece of his manufacture that did not satisfy his own severe judgment. And in his relations to his workmen he had adopted the principle of the living wage, and even of profit-sharing, before he began to study such questions from a larger point of view. He could hardly ever be induced to discharge a workman even for habitual negligence or, in some cases which could be quoted, for actual dishonesty. Of the feelings of his social inferiors—or indeed of his social equals—he was sometimes strangely inconsiderate; but towards their weaknesses he was habitually indulgent.

So far did he carry this interest in producing the best work regardless of expense and this careless confidence in the honesty of his workmen, that without some other responsible business manager Merton Abbey would have wrecked the fortunes of the firm. It was encumbered with old or incompetent workmen paid by time, while the more skilled hands were put on piece-work; and similarly in the office the inferior clerks had fixed salaries for so many hours' work a day and no more, while the upper clerks were to a certain extent profit-sharers in the proceeds of the business. This system of profit-sharing was, even during the later years at Queen Square, in process of extension among the higher grades of the workmen. The result of this mingled generosity and slackness was that in the staple product of printed cottons the Staffordshire manufacturers, with their keen eye to profit and machine-like organization, could supply goods, purporting at least to be the same in quality, forty per cent. cheaper than they were turned out at Merton: and till the works were put under more stringent management, the profits of Oxford Street were almost wholly

absorbed by the experiments and the leakage of Merton.

In Morris's lectures on Art, and more especially on those lesser arts of life which, though his eye always remained fixed on the greater arts in their culminating glories of architecture and poetry, he had chosen for his own daily province in practice, the outcome of those instincts which had made him a manufacturer, and of that experience which his work as a manufacturer had given him, is visible in many passages of humour or wisdom. In the lecture entitled "Making the Best of it," it is himself whom he describes with complete accuracy in his description of "a handicraftsman who shall put his own individual intelligence and enthusiasm into the goods he fashions. So far from his labour being 'divided,' which is the technical phrase for his always doing one minute piece of work and never being allowed to think of any other, so far from that, he must know all about the ware he is making and its relation to similar wares; he must have a natural aptitude for his work so strong, that no education can force him away from his special bent. He must be allowed to think of what he is doing, and to vary his work as the circumstances of it vary, and his own moods. He must be for ever stirring to make the piece he is at work at better than the last. He must refuse at anybody's bidding to turn out, I won't say a bad, but even an indifferent piece of work, whatever the public want, or think they want. He must have a voice, and a voice worth listening to, in the whole affair."

Such is the ideal handicraftsman whom he thus drew from his own likeness. For what lay at the root of his belief was that this life, the life which he had himself deliberately chosen, should be, and might

be, accessible to all. He recognized no essential difference between an artist and a workman. Until a state of society were realized in which (according to his version of the Platonic paradox) artists should be workmen, and workmen artists, no really sound, and living, and permanent art could exist. And the hire of the workman in any really civilized community should be precisely, neither more nor less, what he claimed as his own due, and what he was satisfied with as his own recompense: "Money enough to keep him from fear of want or degradation for him and his; leisure enough from bread-earning work (even though it be pleasant to him) to give him time to read and think, and connect his own life with the life of the great world; work enough of the kind aforesaid, and praise of it, and encouragement enough to make him feel good friends with his fellows; and lastly (not least, for 'tis verily part of the bargain) his own due share of art, the chief part of which will be a dwelling that does not lack the beauty which Nature would freely allow it, if our own perversity did not turn Nature out of doors."

In this last clause of his definition of the ideal life, not for isolated individuals, nor for a cultured class, but for universal mankind, he returns to his perpetual insistence on the value of architecture, in its widest sense, as the beginning and end of all the arts of life. To him, the man lived in the house almost as the soul lives in the body. The degradation of architecture and of its subservient arts of decoration was at once the cause and the effect of the whole degradation of human life.

But how to begin? His own work as a decorator led him to see that in the furnishing of the house, such as it was, a practical beginning, however slight, might

be made by every one. Hence he was led to the formulation of his celebrated rule—a rule that, as he said without boasting, will fit everybody; "Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful." There is no more brilliant example of a rule that is at once completely universal in its scope, and completely certain in its application.

"To my mind," he says in another lecture, "it is only here and there (out of the kitchen) that you can find in a well-to-do house things that are of any use at all." By this accumulation of useless things not only are beautiful things kept out, but the very sense of beauty is perpetually dulled and ground away. If this pressure were once removed—so at least he thought, and it can hardly be considered an utopian belief—the natural sense of beauty would slowly begin to recover itself, and at last the house that had in it nothing but what was known to be useful would come to have in it nothing but what was really beautiful; the mistaken or bewildered belief in the beauty of ugly things would disappear, and with the dwindling demand for them they would gradually cease to be produced, and fade away bit by bit out of the world.

Closely connected with this doctrine was his second cardinal axiom: "No work which cannot be done with pleasure in the doing is worth doing." That "natural aptitude for his work so strong that no education can force him away from his special bent" was a quality in him which he could not believe to be unique or even peculiar. "I tried to think what would happen to me," he says in another lecture, that entitled "The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization," "if I were forbidden my ordinary daily work; and I knew that I should die of despair and weariness. It was clear to me that I

worked not in the least in the world for the sake of earning leisure by it, but partly driven by the fear of starvation or disgrace, and partly, and even a very great deal, because I love the work itself." As he accounted labour without pleasure inhuman, so he claimed as the labourer's right an amount of spontaneity in his work that was far removed from the actual conditions of common labour. What he could least bear, he used to say, if he were a workman, was the uninterrupted work required of them during working hours, and he was sorry for men who had to do it. While he was working himself it was always noticeable how he would break off every now and then to get up and look out of the window, or walk up and down the room, and yet his actual output would be faster and more continuous than that of any workman who never stirred from his bench or took his hand off his machine. His horror of pleasureless labour made him keenly sympathetic with the working man even in his least lovely phases. "If I were to work ten hours a day at work I despised and hated, I should spend my leisure, I hope in political agitation, but I fear in drinking." Even of the ideal workman described above, the workman who is an artist, he confesses that "the capitalist will be apt to call him a troublesome fellow; and in fact he will be troublesome, mere grit and friction in the wheels of the money-making machine, yes, will stop the machine perhaps." And so for the workman who was troublesome without being an artist, who was grit in the wheels from no high discontent or haunting ideal, but only from the incompetence and vice he had inherited from a degraded ancestry and developed in an inhuman environment, he made the largest allowances and had almost inexhaustible patience.

Thus it was that, before and after the adoption of

his final political creed, Morris carried on his work patiently from day to day, and thus it was that he exhorted others by word and example to carry on theirs; "not living like fools and fine gentlemen, and not beaten by the muddle, but like good fellows trying by some dim candle-light to set our workshop ready against to-morrow's daylight." Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCENTRATION

1882

Of the year between the establishment of the works at Merton Abbey and the return of Morris to active political life as a member of the Socialist party at the beginning of 1883, it so happens that there are unusually few records. Perhaps their scarcity is not altogether accidental. He was working out new theories of life; he was doing this very much alone; and he had less leisure than usual, and perhaps less inclination than leisure, for correspondence, or for holiday-making, or for anything beyond work and thought. "I feel a lonely kind of a chap," he says of himself, half humorously and half self-pityingly. Early in the year he had gone down with his elder daughter to the little house at Rottingdean which Burne-Jones had bought the year before. From there he wrote to Mrs. Burne-Jones on the 10th of January:

"Here we are: having just come back from an expedition to Brighton: we spent an hour or more in the aquarium (where our presence caused astonishment, YE Old English Fair not having begun till the afternoon, nor the other damnations which are strung on the much neglected fish). I think I saw more ugly

people in Brighton in the course of an hour than I have seen otherwise for the last twenty years: as you justly remark, serves me right for going into Brighton: but you see we went there to do a little shopping. Yesterday was a lovely day, and we took a trap and drove to Lewes: you have to go a long way round, as the wheel-roads across the downs are doubtful it seems: it is very beautiful when you get on to the brow of the hill above Falmer: a long way off to the right you can see Lewes lying like a box of toys under a great amphitheatre of chalk hills: the whole ride is very pleasant: Lewes when you get there lies on a ridge in its valley, the street winding down to the river (Ouse) which runs into the sea at Newhaven: on the whole it is set down better than any town I have seen in England: unluckily it is not a very interesting town in itself: there is a horrible workhouse or prison on the outskirts, and close by a hideous row of builders' houses: there are three old Churches in it, dismally restored, but none of them ever over-remarkable: there is the remain of a castle, 14th century: but it is not grand at all. Never the less it isn't a bad country town, only not up to its position.

"The house is very pleasant and agreeable and suits me to a T; and I am in very good order, and quite satisfied, bating a little unavoidable anxiety, though J. has been hitherto quite well and seemingly very happy. I am hard at work on my Birmingham lecture: I don't feel as if I had much left to say, but must do all I can to say it decently, so as not to discredit the cause."

To write a new lecture was still immense labour and pain to him: "I know what I want to say, but the cursed words go to water between my fingers"; and the discouragement in which he writes to Mrs. Burne-Jones again on his return to London a week later is

partly no doubt the effect of this struggle over the lecture on "Some of the Minor Arts of Life," which he was now preparing. It was delivered at the Midland Institute, Birmingham, on the 23rd of January, and was afterwards printed, under the title of "The Lesser Arts of Life," in the volume of lectures on Art published that year in aid of the funds of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings. In both letters it will be noticed that the "cause" still means to him primarily and specifically that of art, though the name of art has taken to him a new and a more profound meaning.

"I am just going to finish my day with a couple of hours' work on my lecture, but will first write you a line, since pen, ink, and paper are at hand, and seeing withal that to-morrow I shall not have any time at all to myself.

"May came to hand safely this morning, thank you kindly for having her. As to Jenny, she has been to my joy very well and in bright spirits all the week, so I have no doubt our sojourn there did her good: it was her birthday on Tuesday: 21 my dear old Jenny was.

"I have perhaps rather more than enough of work to do, and for that reason or what not, am dwelling somewhat low down in the valley of humiliation—quite good enough for me doubtless. Yet it sometimes seems to me as if my lot was a strange one: you see, I work pretty hard, and on the whole very cheerfully, not altogether I hope for mere pudding, still less for praise; and while I work I have the cause always in mind, and yet I know that the cause for which I specially work is doomed to fail, at least in seeming; I mean that art must go under, where or how ever it may come up again. I don't know if I explain what

I'm driving at, but it does sometimes seem to me a strange thing indeed that a man should be driven to work with energy and even with pleasure and enthusiasm at work which he knows will serve no end but amusing himself; am I doing nothing but make-believe then, something like Louis XVI.'s lock-making? There, I don't pretend to say that the conundrum is a very interesting one, as it certainly has not any practical importance as far as I am concerned, since I shall without doubt go on with my work, useful or useless, till I demit.

"Well, one thing I long for which will certainly come, the sunshine and the spring. Meantime we are hard at work gardening here: making dry paths, and a sublimely tidy box edging: how I do love tidyness!"

A letter to Mr. George Howard of about the same date shows that he had not yet wholly dissociated himself from the Liberal party, nor given up the hopes which had excited him after the General Election of 1880. He had then looked eagerly to the formation of an independent Radical wing which might force the Whigs to move forward on penalty of being thrown out of office. The amalgamation of Whigs and Tories as a powerful constitutional or Unionist party, to prevent such a result, had not yet occurred to him as the natural outlet from this position; though soon afterwards, and long before the thing actually happened, he foresaw it with much clearness.

"Rottingdean,
"Jan. 10th, 1882.

"My dear George,

"You see I am away for a few days, which accounts for my not answering your letter at once: we had a letter from the parson's wife of Brampton asking

for patterns for that name: I bid them send a big worsted pattern which I thought would be best, as 'tis mostly blue, which I fancy the Church wants: only you must think that under that very bright window all woven stuffs will look grey. If the blue looks too grey, I fear there is nothing for it but the brightest red: we have a woollen stuff very bright and telling (3-ply pomegranate), or would red damask silk be too costly?

"I suppose your election is the North Riding: I haven't seen a paper for four days, so don't know how it's going: so can only wish you good speed. I make, with all apologies for my impudence, the unpolitical remark, that I hope you have got a good candidate: 'tis better to be beaten with a good one than be successful with a bad one. I guess there will be a fine procession of rats before this parliament is over: that will teach us, I hope, not to run the worst man possible on all occasions. Excuse the spleen of a kind of Radical cobbler.

"With best wishes from
"Yours affectionately,
"WILLIAM MORRIS."

Two months later he writes again to Mr. Howard in a much less philosophic vein. A sudden risk had arisen that the works at Merton Abbey might be ruined by the cutting off of the water-supply of the Wandle.

"Merton Abbey,
"March 16th, 1882.

"My dear George,

"I am in a fix—for look here; I took this place mainly for the sake of its water-power, and for

the water of the Wandle; and now the Wandle is going to be dried up—no less—there is a bill before a committee on Monday, as I hear suddenly, to enable the London and South Western Water Company to tap the head springs of the river at Carshalton: the river is almost wholly fed from these springs, and tapping them thus would reduce it to a muddy ditch. As to myself I don't much care, as I always said we ought to have gone into the country, but on public grounds I could burst when I think of it: the Wandle from here upwards is a most beautiful stream as perhaps you know. I shall try to see you on Saturday morning; but meantime can you do anything in the House to help to stop such a damned iniquity?

"Yours affectionately,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

He unburdens himself on the same subject in the letter to Ellis which follows. The first part of it relates to alterations in the channel of the upper Thames recently made by the Conservancy, which had the effect of draining off the Kelmscott backwater and making the boat-house there useless. Ellis had just brought up some perch from Kelmscott to stock the water at Merton Abbey.

"Kelmscott House,

"March 22nd, 1882.

"My dear Ellis,

"Thank you for your note: I imagine I understand what they are going to do, although your explanation would have been helped by a plan: I had heard something of this before, but hoped it would not take place in our time. However something they will leave behind them so long as the old house stands;

only strange it is that we are tumbled just into the time when these things go quickest: after us in a while I think things will mend; before us change was slower. Meanwhile I ought to have thanked you for your perch before, especially as I know what a trouble it is to bring such wet goods up to town: only, news for news, nay, water news for water news, I have suddenly discovered that it may not be long that they will have water to swim in; whereas a society, calling itself the London and South Western Spring Water Company, has a bill in Parliament to enable them to sink a well at Carshalton which will drain the Carshalton Wandle, and give us a muddy ditch instead of my water and water-power: jolly isn't it? there are 7 miles of Wandle and 40 mills on that 7 miles, and here we are to be landed without compensation just to put some money into promoters' pockets, unless we can manage to get the bill thrown out in Committee. You see that 'tis jobbery (not mastery) that mows the meadow: what compensation we should have got, if this had been public money that was in question! However there is a strong opposition to the thieves, so perhaps my perch may die a natural death (by hook to wit) after all. I was up the water to-day to see about this matter, and at Carshalton for the first time; a pretty place still in spite of the building.

"Yours ever truly,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

The opposition to the Bill, in which Morris had, of course, the hearty support of the other thirty-nine mill-owners immediately concerned in the Wandle as a source of water-power, was successful. "The water company," he writes at the end of March, "terrified by our bold front, has climbed down and has agreed

not to meddle with the Wandle: so this time I am quit for the fright, and whatsoever part of £50 the lawyers' conscience will let them grab of me. Cheap at the price both for me and the public I think, since I have seen more of the river. On Wednesday Wardle and I went up the river and saw as much as we could get at: a wild day of storm and bitter wind it turned out, yet I think we enjoyed it. As we got to Wallington I thought I would go and call on Arthur Hughes, and did so to my pleasure: we were very glad to see each other, though perhaps when we got to talking were somewhat gravelled: he lives in a beautiful place, and the Croydon branch of the Wandle sweeps round his bit of close.

"I went up the water again on Friday with G. Howard and R. Grosvenor and had a pleasant half rainy day, seeing a great deal of the water, much of it quite quiet and unspoiled; it is really very beautiful, crystal clear in spite of all the mills. When you come on the ponds at Carshalton, where it rises or seems to rise, the surprise is most delightful and strange: a village green, only the green is the pond, quite bright and clear, the road across the fall of it from one level to another, and springs bubbling up amidst it all over. The whole river swarms with trout."

This peril over, work at Merton went on pleasantly and successfully. "I have just twice as much to do since we began at Merton," he writes in June. "At the same time I think it likely enough that my carpet business may fail commercially. I shan't like that; but as to giving up the whole affair because of it, if I say so it is mere ill-temper on my part, always supposing we can struggle on somehow." But his daughter's severe and repeated illnesses during the summer and autumn upset the whole year for him. It is not put-

ting the case too strongly to say that for the time they thoroughly shattered his nerve, though the private correspondence in which this appears is neither meant nor suited for a wider public.

This household anxiety coloured all the world to him: and even Kelmscott that year could not charm away his melancholy. The sense of change seemed brooding everywhere, and a dim shadow of unhappiness clung about the "sweet-looking clean waterside." He felt it even at Godstow, "less changed than any beautiful place I know, the very fields that stretch up to Wytham much the same as they always were with their wealth of poplar and willow trees, the most beautiful meadows to be seen anywhere." "So it will be," he goes on, "till civilized life is quite changed, every alteration in the material world will be for the worse."

The same desperate concentration of mind, the feeling of one thing, and one thing alone, being needful, reappears in another letter which is one of the extremely rare instances of his criticism of a contemporary writer. It was written soon after the publication of Mr. Swinburne's "Tristram of Lyonnesse."

"As to the poem, I have made two or three attempts to read it, but have failed, not being in the mood I suppose: nothing would lay hold of me at all. This is doubtless my own fault, since it certainly did seem very fine. But, to confess and be hanged, you know I never could really sympathize with Swinburne's work; it always seemed to me to be founded on literature, not on nature. In saying this I really cannot accuse myself of any jealousy on the subject, as I think also you will not. Now I believe that Swinburne's sympathy with literature is most genuine and complete; and it is a pleasure to hear him talk

about it, which he does in the best vein possible; he is most steadily enthusiastic about it. Now time was when the poetry resulting merely from this intense study and love of literature might have been, if not the best, yet at any rate very worthy and enduring: but in these days when all the arts, even poetry, are like to be overwhelmed under the mass of material riches which civilization has made and is making more and more hastily every day; riches which the world has made indeed, but cannot use to any good purpose: in these days the issue between art, that is, the godlike part of man, and mere bestiality, is so momentous, and the surroundings of life are so stern and unplayful, that nothing can take serious hold of people, or should do so, but that which is rooted deepest in reality and is quite at first hand: there is no room for anything which is not forced out of a man of deep feeling, because of its innate strength and vision.

"In all this I may be quite wrong and the lack may be in myself: I only state my opinion, I don't defend it; still less do I my own poetry."

He was thinking in these last words, no doubt, of his own unwritten poem on the same subject, the story of Tristram and Iseult: the one which his "soul yearned to do" twelve years before, when he had just completed "The Earthly Paradise," and which was the episode of the whole Arthurian cycle that held his imagination most strongly.

On the 23rd of August he writes more cheerfully to Mrs. Burne-Jones:

"We went on Saturday to call on the De Morgans at Witley and found them lodging in a newish red brick house, the surroundings of which rather reminded one of Mrs. Bodichon's Scalands: afterwards we drove down with them and the Allinghams through woodland

lanes up on to the great commons and Hind Head Hill on the Portsmouth Road: covered it was, much of it, with heather and ling, all in blossom at this season, and seeming to me not the best chosen of colours though so very bright; but the place is very beautiful, and amazingly free from anything Cockney-base, considering how near it is to London: the best part of it the beauty of the oaks, now in their new foliage hanging about the rare cornfields; for the tilth is scanty in this sandy woodland country. Allingham's dwelling is in a very pleasant and beautiful spot, but the house highly uninteresting though not specially hideous, nor the get up inside of it very pleasant (though not very bad), as you might imagine: the garden too that discomforting sort of place that a new garden with no special natural gifts is apt to be: I should like to have made them better it. As to that country in general, in spite of all its beauty, it didn't quite touch me (except as pleasant hills and meadows and lanes). For one thing it is very thinly inhabited, and looks more than most countrysides as if it were kept for the pleasure of the rich, as indeed it is: but I don't know anything of it but this one visit. I must take a turn of walking through it one day: for this thing interests me in it, that if ever I am to live out of London (as I don't suppose I ever shall), and Merton goes on, somewhere thereabouts I should have to pitch my tent.

"I am much encouraged by your interest in our Merton Crafts, and shall do my best to make it pay so that we may keep it going, though, as I have told you, I can't hide from myself that there is a chance of failure (commercial I mean) in the matter: in which case I must draw in my horns, and try to shuffle out of the whole affair decently, and live there-

after small and certain if possible: little would be my grief at that same. This is looking at the worst side, which I think one ought to do; but I *think* we shall on the whole succeed; though a rich man (so-called) I never either can or will become: nay, I am trying in a feeble way to be more thrifty—whereof no more, lest I boast now and be disgraced at Christmas.

"I have been reading more of Carlyle's life, and find it deeply interesting in spite of Froude; usually I find biographies dull to extremity, I suppose because they are generally a mass of insincerities and platitudes: but in this book is a man speaking who can say what he thinks even in a letter (I wish I could). I like him much the better for having read this book, after that other mass of moodiness, and I fare to feel as if he were on the right side in spite of all faults.

"I have to go now to Oxford Street and then to the Mansion House to the Icelandic Relief Committee, which I am afraid owing to the time of the year is like to be a dead failure."

A week later he writes again:

"I have not been well, and there have been other troubles also of which I won't speak, and the sum of all has rather made me break down.

"I hope I am not quite unhumble, or want to be the only person in the world untroubled; but I have been ever loth to think that there were no people going through life, not without pain indeed, but with simplicity and free from blinding entanglements. Such an one I want to be, and my faith is that it is possible for most men to be no worse. Yet indeed I am older, and the year is evil; the summerless season, and famine and war, and the folly of peoples come back again, as it were, and the more and more obvious death of art before it rises again, are heavy

matters to a small creature like me, who cannot choose but think about them, and can mend them scarce a whit.

"However, to stand up for oneself and tip them Long Melford, as Miss Berners says (and also in his way old Carlyle), is the only cure; and indeed I try it at whiles."

With the exception of two lectures given on behalf of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Iceland Famine Relief Fund was the only public matter in which Morris took any part during the year. In the depths of his own household anxiety this work came as a kind of relief; and during August and September he was busy over it, writing letters to the newspapers and making personal appeals to all his acquaintance. "For those," he wrote to the Times on the 5th of August, "who have never been in Iceland nor read its ancient literature there still remains the undoubted fact that they are a kindly, honest, and intelligent people, bearing their lot, at the best a hard one, with singular courage and cheerfulness, and keeping up through all difficulties in their remote desert (for such indeed is the land in spite of its beauty and romance) an elevation of mind and a high degree of culture, which would be honourable to countries much more favoured by nature." But the work could not distract him long from his own thoughts. "I have had a bad time of it lately and feel ten years older than I did in June," he writes again six weeks later. "I saw to-day about a book written by an Italian peasant (near Verona) complaining of their misery. How shocking it seemed to me that all the riches of rich lands should be wasted till they are no better than the poorest for most men. Think what the constitution of civilized society must be when the

Italian peasant is not better off, but worse off (taking one year with another), than his brother of Iceland!"

In connexion with this Icelandic famine and the work of the Mansion House Committee there is a most characteristic note to Ellis written from Kelmscott on the 29th of September. It should perhaps be explained that there had been correspondence in the London papers making little of the distress in Iceland, and questioning whether there were in fact any famine at all there. Mr. Magnússon had just started for Reykjavik with the money and provisions already collected, in order to investigate matters on the spot.

"I am so vexed that you should have had all this trouble; except for the circumstances which you know of, I would have made a point of staying in London and seeing the matter through. I cannot find that beastly letter. When I saw you Monday week I put what letters I thought would be wanted into an envelope which I intended to give you, but I was so muddled by my own troubles that I daresay I did not; nor can I be sure that the letter was in it. Meantime I have written a letter to the bloody Times which I also inclose; if you think it worth while please send it on; after which I really don't see what any of us can do till Magnússon comes back. I repeat I am so vexed that you should have been let in for such worrits—I am reminded of Swinburne's view of providence when he said that he never saw an old gentleman give a sixpence to a beggar, but he was straightway run over by a 'bus."

But apart from all private anxieties, the pressure on Morris's mind during these autumn and winter months seems from several indications to have been greater

than it was either before or since. It is a curious sign of his loneliness and self-absorption at this time, that no two of his friends (so far as I am able to ascertain) agree in their view of the steps by which he became a convinced Socialist and the main influences—whether men or events or books—that served to shape his course at this time precisely in the way it took. His own letters of the time, so far as they exist, give little clue to any changes which were going on in his mind. The account which he himself gave some ten years later is no doubt abstractly accurate. "A brief period of political Radicalism," he then wrote, "during which I saw my ideal clear enough, but had no hope of any realization of it, came to an end some months before I joined the Democratic Federation, and the meaning of my joining that body was, that I had conceived a hope of the realization of that ideal." But for the growth of this hope no one cause can be assigned. He once said to Mr. G. B. Shaw that he had been converted to Socialism by Mill, in his posthumously published papers analyzing the system of Fourier, in which he "clearly gave the verdict against the evidence." In the article already quoted, Morris alludes to these papers, and says that they put the finishing touch to his conversion. It may be doubted whether even this modified statement is not an unconscious over-statement, and whether Morris does not here mix up the causes of his conversion with the reasons by which that conversion could be justified. For some considerable time after he became a professed Socialist, he worked hard at the task of proving his belief. "I put some conscience into trying to learn the economical side of Socialism, and even tackled Marx, though I suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the economics of that work." But the belief,

while it was not unreasoned, was not the outcome (if any belief be) of abstract economic reasoning.

While it is true to say that during these months Morris was moving towards Socialism, it would also be true to say that Socialism was moving towards him. It was "the consciousness of revolution stirring," he says himself, which "prevented me, luckier than many others of artistic perceptions, from crystallizing into a mere railer against progress on the one hand, and on the other from wasting time and energy in any of the numerous schemes by which the quasi-artistic of the middle classes hope to make art grow when it has no longer any root." His own beliefs and sympathies changed little, while the tendency of public thought was changing fast, and he might reasonably claim that, both before and after this so-called parting of the ways, he had, since he first began to think for himself, been consistent throughout his life. The history of the Socialist movement in England during the years which succeeded the war of 1870 has yet to be written; and a biographer would be straying far beyond the limits of his appointed task if he became an analyst of social conditions or a historian of institutions. But it must be noted that just at this time, that spirit of profound discontent, which is also a spirit of hope—which, unable to rest in the present, looks forward and not backward—was widely in the air. "All countries and all individuals hang to the past, but seem hardly to think of the future. I suppose we should, like the Jewish prophets, get the habit of looking onwards to the future and not backwards to the past." Such, a generation earlier, had been the words of one of the great formative intelligences of the age, as he observed, not without a large degree of sympathy, the Chartist movement and the Christian Socialism of Kingsley

and Maurice. It seemed now as if the spirit were once more in the ascendant. "The era of administration has come" was a phrase much in the mouths of economic writers. The Irish legislation of successive Governments had already, in the judgment of dispassionate observers, committed one, if not both, of the two great political parties to what might be properly called a Socialist programme. The International, though as an organized force it had been broken up in 1872, had even in its dispersion scattered widely the seeds of a cosmopolitan revolt against the domination of capital and of the middle classes. Its doctrines had to some extent permeated the leading English Trades Unions. Intelligent London artisans had in large numbers familiarized themselves with the doctrines of Karl Marx and the more recent theories of Henry George. At meetings of working men there were shouts for Revolution. The repressive measures taken in France and Austria after the Commune, and in Germany by Bismarck some years later, had incidentally filled London with foreign refugees, whose influence spread silently in many directions. The position may be summed up in Morris's own words by saying that there was no longer, among the mass of the working class in London, any decided hostility to Socialism, and that the working man who took an interest in politics was generally in favour of Socialist tendencies so far as he understood them.

In 1881 an effort had been set on foot to organize the various Radical clubs of working men in different parts of London, and to give the organization a definite bias in favour of what were becoming known as Socialistic principles. The result was the formation of a body known as the Democratic Federation. Its programme was, broadly speaking, that of the political

Radicalism of the time, and directed towards alterations in the mere machinery of government—annual Parliaments, payment of Members, abolition of the House of Lords, and the like. The only distinctively "Socialist" article in its creed was a claim, not further defined, for the nationalization of land.

But as time went on the Federation became, partly by the secession of members who belonged to the older school of Radicalism, partly by a new enthusiasm among the younger men, more and more Socialist in general tendency and sympathy: and the practical changes which it advocated all went in the direction of setting up a State Socialism of a somewhat drastic kind. The "Democrat without ulterior views" of the previous generation was becoming a Social Democrat; was asking what was the use of democratic institutions, and whether they were an end or only a means. Once this question was fairly raised, the whole existing system of society began to rock and waver. To the new analysis, the status of a middle class was as artificial, and therefore as capable of removal, as all the privileges and anomalies which had been swept away by that middle class itself, when once it took the pains to organize itself and set hand to the work. People were even beginning to ask themselves, with a sudden shock of disenchantment, what reason there was for the existence of a middle class at all.

"Numbers of young men," such was the account given some seven years later by one of the most thoughtful leaders of the movement, which had then parted with some of its unreasoning enthusiasm and lost the dazzle of its earlier hope, "pupils of Mill, Spencer, Comte, and Darwin, roused by Mr. Henry George's 'Progress and Poverty,' left aside evolution and free thought; took to insurrectionary economics;

studied Karl Marx; and were so convinced that Socialism had only to be put clearly before the working classes to concentrate the power of their immense numbers in one irresistible organization, that the Revolution was fixed for 1889 (the anniversary of the French Revolution) at latest. The opposition we got was uninstructive: it was mainly founded on the assumption that our projects were theoretically unsound but immediately possible, whereas our weak point lay in the case being exactly the reverse."

By one of those large and gradual changes of opinion which are seldom traceable to any distinct cause, the middle class had just then become deeply discredited. Matthew Arnold, after a lifetime spent in persistent efforts to arouse it to a sense of its own shortcomings, had abandoned the task in despair and given utterance to a new creed, that of hope in the working class; the creed which he formulated in an address delivered to the Ipswich Working Men's College under the title *Ecce convertimur ad Gentes*. The change—so far as it was a change—that had passed over Morris was somewhat parallel, but led him towards utterance more violent in proportion to his imaginative ardour and the impatience of his temperament.

"I have no very ardent interest," Arnold said in that address, "in politics in their present state in this country. What interests me is English civilization; and our politics in their present state do not seem to me to have much bearing upon that. Both the natural reason of the thing and also the proof from practical experience seem to me to show the same thing; that for modern civilization some approach to equality is necessary, and that an enormous inequality like ours is a hindrance to our civilization. Our

middle classes know neither man nor the world; they have no light, and can give none." So far the two men are in complete agreement; and though Morris might have expressed himself in phrases less lucidly temperate, there is even a curious and quite unpremeditated likeness in the language which they use. "Can the middle class regenerate themselves?" Morris asks, and answers the question essentially as Arnold answered it. "At first sight," are his words, "one would say that a body of people so powerful, who have built up the gigantic edifice of modern commerce, whose science, invention, and energy have subdued the forces of nature to serve their everyday purposes, and who guide the organization that keeps these natural powers in subjection in a way almost miraculous; at first sight one would say, surely such a mighty mass of wealthy men could do anything they please. And yet I doubt it. Why do not you—and I—set about doing this to-morrow? Because we cannot."

"For twenty years," Arnold went on in the Ipswich address, "I have been vainly urging this upon the middle classes themselves. Now I urge it upon you. Carry it forward yourselves, and insist on taking the middle class with you." But Morris could not stand aloof to give counsel; he must needs be in the thick of the conflict. A passage in a lecture delivered at the beginning of 1884 seems to express his attitude precisely in the way that he felt and meant it. "The cause of art," he there says, "is the cause of the people. We well-to-do people, those of us who love art, not as a toy, but as a thing necessary to the life of man, have for our best work the raising of the standard of life among the people. How can we of the middle classes, we the capitalists and our hangers-

on, help? By renouncing our class, and on all occasions when antagonism rises up between the classes, casting in our lot with the victims; those who are condemned at the best to lack of education, refinement, leisure, pleasure, and renown; and at the worst, to a life lower than that of the most brutal of savages. There is no other way."

There can be little doubt that this passage, though not written till after he had joined a Socialist organization, expresses with great accuracy the frame of mind which made him take the step of joining it. In addressing middle-class audiences this was the offer which he distinctly made them: "To these I offer a means," were his words, repeated again and again on public platforms, "of renouncing their class by joining the only body in this country which puts forward constructive Socialism as its programme."

That, if the privileged classes became merged in a Third Estate, national equality and national unity would be the result, is a thesis which may be variously argued either in abstract logic or from the lessons of history. But it is perhaps more to the point to ask how far it is possible in the nature of things that a man should renounce his class. Into that class he was born: in it he has grown and lived: it environs him with the constant pressure of an atmosphere: he clings to it and draws his daily life out of it by a thousand filaments of inherited tradition and acquired habit. To many it may seem that Arnold, and not Morris, in this instance pointed out the true path. Morris's own language with regard to the matter, while not always strictly consistent, often indicates that he saw as clearly as any man the hopelessness of any attempt to elevate the working class from without. He never deceived himself into think-

ing that, by taking his stand thus on the side of those whom he called the workers, he had ceased himself to be a professional man, a hanger-on (for so he defined the term "professional man") of the capitalist class. His hope was that at the touch of an external impulse leaders among the workers themselves might arise, with whom or under whom he might himself be permitted to work. It was only after years of disappointment that he realized that the time for this had not yet come. But his whole life bore witness to the sincerity and self-sacrificing devotion with which he followed the path he conceived to be that of his highest duty.

This renunciation of his own class at all events, so far as such a thing could be actually done, presented itself to him as a step which now more than ever would have, so far as he himself was concerned, real value and significance. His position in the eyes of the world was more than respectable; it might even be described, within limits, as famous. He had a recognized place in the first rank of living poets. He had no less recognized an authority on all matters relating to the theory and practice of the decorative arts. He was a well-known and (in spite of the temporary embarrassments which attended the first year of the work at Merton Abbey) a prosperous manufacturer, whose goods travelled far, and carried their own guarantee of excellence in design and workmanship. He might speak of renunciation as one who had something not inconsiderable to renounce. Just at the moment when he was making up his mind to take some decisive step, he was unanimously elected an Honorary Fellow of his College at Oxford; a distinction which, always rare, is generally reserved for old members who have attained the highest official rank in their pro-

fession, and implies a tribute to very special distinction in one who is not a Bishop or a Privy Councillor. This honour was conferred on him on the 13th of January, 1883. He had gone down to Bournemouth that day to see his daughter. "Such a pile of letters I found waiting me," he wrote to her on the 17th, after coming back to London, "some of them like those of David Copperfield after he had become an author." That same day he enrolled himself as a member of the Democratic Federation.

On his card of membership, which is signed by H. H. Champion, he is described as "William Morris, designer." It was on his status as a workman that he based his claim to admission into the fighting rank of a working-class movement. The step, which in a sense cut him definitely away from respectability, was in no way a merely formal one. He took it with a full sense of its import. "I am truly glad," were his words, with something of the grave joy of a convert, "that I have joined the only society I could find which is definitely Socialistic." His support of the new movement, even before he formally joined it, had not been confined to theoretical sympathy. In the previous October he had sold the greater part of his valuable library, in order to devote the proceeds to the furtherance of Socialism. Though he was not exactly a bibliophile, many of these treasures cost him a pang to part with, from the "De Claris Mulieribus," which had been his first purchase among the masterpieces of the early printers, down to oddly printed collections of Sagas from the Skálaholt Press, which he had acquired in Iceland. "If the modern books are unsaleable," he wrote to Ellis, "perhaps you would let me take them out after your valuation, as I have no idea what they are worth to sell (though beastly

dear to buy), and though I hate them and should be glad to be rid of them as far as pleasure is concerned, they are of some use to me professionally—though by the way I am not a professional man, but a tradesman."

A few letters to Bournemouth during the winter indicate how his daily work went on, notwithstanding the excitement of the new departure. "Yesterday," he writes on the 6th of December, "I spent the day at the South Kensington Museum. My opinion was wanted as to the value of a set of textiles which old Canon Bock has offered them: there were some very interesting pieces among them: a noble piece of Sicilian woven stuff of a pattern I haven't seen before; a fine piece of 13th century Syrian silk with (real) Arab writing in it: some fragments of the very early cloths also, and a great quantity of good 17th century patterns; also a good collection of printed goods from the 14th century till the beginnings on the Wandle. I had also to decide as to whether the Museum should buy three large pieces of tapestry (of about 1530), but I refused them, as they were not really good, and had been gammoned badly: also they were too dear, £1,200 for the three and not worth more than £400 at the most. I have made three new patterns for embroidery, two small table-cloths, and one cushion."

And on the 19th from Merton:

"It is a lovely day here, though it was dark and thick in town; but I cannot get about the works, for the gout has made another grab at me: it feels so queer to be here and a kind of prisoner to the house: however I have ordered the cab to be here at 6 to take me back to Hammersmith, and I have plenty of small designing work to do meantime. As to our printing, we are really not quite straight yet: I am

quite ashamed of it: however they are doing Brother Rabbit successfully, and the Anemone will go on now, and when we are once out of this difficulty, I really think we shall have seen the worst of it. Item, we are going to get our wheel set straight during the Christmas holidays, so as not to stop work; the poor critter wants it very badly, for every now and then when there is not much water on, it really seems as if he stopped to think, like a lazy boy turning a grindstone. Well, here is an end of my paper, and Mr. Barret the wood-cutter come to see about cutting the design I made down there—I shall call it Christchurch, not Bournemouth."

On New Year's Day he writes again:

"I duly went to Merton on Thursday, and found the wheel by no means finished as they had promised: indeed it all looked like a boy who has pulled his watch to pieces and can't put it together again; however I expect to find all going to-day. I am going to sleep at Merton to-night I fancy: because on Wednesday I have to go to an Icelandic meeting at 12 (noon). There will be no contested election here: I could have wished a real Radical could have been found to stand against Dilke, but then the Tories would have run a man, and probably got him in. Do you see the Pope is going to canonize Sir Thomas More? the Socialists ought to look up, if that is to be their (late) reward."

More's "Utopia" had been one of the books he had read aloud at Kelmscott during his melancholy autumn holiday, and it had no inconsiderable influence over him; much more, it seems, than the professedly Socialistic treatises — Marx's "Capital," Wallace's "Land Nationalization," and the like—which he had been rather dispiritedly ploughing through. Socialists more versed in abstract economic theories than him-

self were inclined to accuse him of sentimentalism; and in this, as in other spheres of activity, the demands of the romantic imagination were as imperious in him as ever. A fairly complete list happens to be extant in a private diary of what he read aloud at the Grange, where he still regularly spent Sunday morning and one other evening every week, during the year just ended. The only new book in the list is "Erewhon," one of the first and ablest of those modern Utopias which were coming into fashion, and a book that Morris greatly admired. The rest are all old and tried friends; Monte Cristo, The Three Musketeers, Redgauntlet, David Copperfield, Great Expectations, Tales of Old Japan, and on the last evening of the year his earliest love of all, the Arabian Nights.

CHAPTER XV

THE DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION

1883-1884

For the two years during which Morris was a member of the Democratic Federation, there is little in his life to chronicle which is not directly connected with that organization, and with his own development under its influence into a more logical and uncompromising type of Socialist. For reasons which are easy to appreciate, and of which his own statement will be given later, he did not, either when he joined it as an active member or afterwards, abandon his own profession as a manufacturer, or his own status as a man of letters. But it took up a principal, and, as time went on, an absorbing share of his time, thought, and energy. His production in pure literature, whether prose or verse, fell for these years wholly into abeyance: his production as a designer was greatly curtailed; and his management of his business became more and more perfunctory. Fears were often expressed by his friends that the effect on the business might be grave, if not disastrous. But it had been solidly founded, and was kept up by the skill and energy of his managers, Mr. George Wardle and Messrs. F. and R. Smith, who were now practically partners as well. Morris himself

was nearly always ready to respond to the call for new designs that were really needed, and to apply his strong common sense to questions that were submitted for his decision.

There are several indications that when he now plunged into politics, he was on the brink of a new departure in the field of romance. One may even conjecture the path it would have taken. The heroic cycle of Iran had long held in his mind a place next to those of Greece and Scandinavia. "He loved everything Persian," Sir Edward Burne-Jones says, "including the wild confusion of their chronology." His profound study of Oriental design in its application to pottery and textiles had recently reinforced his interest in the Persian epic. At the beginning of 1883 he was deep in Mohl's French translation of the Shah Nameh, and had begun a version of his own from the French into English, of which a considerable fragment was executed. But now, under a constraining sense of social duty, this and all other literary plans were given up by him for the service of the Federation. It was nearly three years later before he once more returned to imaginative work—though still with a political aim and inspiration—in "The Dream of John Ball." In those three years he had indeed produced a large volume of writing. But it was not of a kind which possessed literary value, or was meant for permanence. With the exception of some dozen fragments of poetry, and as many lectures on the relation of art to social conditions, and to the life of mankind, it was professedly and even ostentatiously journalism.

An interesting light is thrown on his attitude of mind at this time by a letter written in January to Mr. Manson, his old colleague on the executive of the National Liberal League. It was in answer to some

question which Mr. Manson had put to him in connexion with the exhibition of Rossetti's pictures and drawings which was then being held at the Burlington Fine Arts Club. Rossetti himself had died in the previous April.

"I can't say," he writes, "how it was that Rossetti took no interest in politics; but so it was: of course he was quite Italian in his general turn of thought; though I think he took less interest in Italian politics than in English, in spite of his knowing several of the leading patriots personally, Saffi for instance. The truth is he cared for nothing but individual and personal matters; chiefly of course in relation to art and literature, but he would take abundant trouble to help any one person who was in distress of mind or body; but the evils of any mass of people he couldn't bring his mind to bear upon. I suppose in short it needs a person of hopeful mind to take disinterested notice of politics, and Rossetti was certainly not hopeful."

The difference here touched, whether or not the explanation offered of it be right, was real and deep. Morris had himself always been one of the people to whom personal matters bear far less than their normal share in life. He was interested in things much more than in people. He had the capacity for loyal friendships and for deep affections; but even of these one might almost say that they did not penetrate to the central part of him. The thing done, the story, or the building, or the picture, or whatever it might be, was what he cared about in the work of his contemporaries and friends no less than in that of other ages or countries: and in his mind these things seem to have been quite independent of the story-teller, or the architect, or the painter, and not merely substantive

things, but one might almost say substantive personalities. So too in the ordinary concerns of life he was strangely incurious of individuals. On one side this quality of mind took the form of an absolute indifference to gossip and scandal, and a capacity of working with the most unsympathetic or disagreeable colleagues, so long as they were helping on the particular work in hand. On another side it resulted in an almost equally marked inconsiderateness. He sometimes seemed to have the aloofness of some great natural force. For sympathy in distress, for soothing in trouble, it was not to him that one would have gone. The lot of the poor, as a class, when he thought of it, had always lain heavily on his spirit. "Indeed, the poor man is always much at the mercy of the rich"—those noble and melancholy words, used just a century before by Johnson to Boswell, express a feeling which was at the root of all Morris's social doctrine. But the sufferings of individuals often only moved him to a certain impatience. Many years before, Rossetti, in one of those flashes of hard insight that made him so terrible a friend, had said of him, "Did you ever notice that Top never gives a penny to a beggar?" Inconsiderate and even unscrupulous as Rossetti was himself in some of the larger affairs of life, this particular instinct of generosity was one which never failed him. For the individual in distress—were it a friend in difficulties, or some unknown poor woman on the street—he was always ready to empty his own pockets, and plunge deeply into those of his friends. Morris's virtues were of a completely different type. Scrupulously just in his dealings, incapable of driving a hard bargain, liberal up to and even beyond his means in the support of an object which had gained his sympathy, he had not in his nature that touch of lavishness that

gives a human warmth to generosity, and may elevate even inconsiderate profusion into a moral excellence. That habit of magnificence, which to the Greek mind was the crown of virtues, was Rossetti's most remarkable quality. In the nature of Morris it had no place. "I am bourgeois, you know, and therefore without the point of honour," he had written many years before to Madox Brown in a moment of real self-appreciation; and his virtues were those of the bourgeois class—industrious, honest, fair-minded up to their lights, but unexpansive and unsympathetic —so far as the touch of genius did not transform him into something quite unique and incalculable.

There is a pleasant sketch of one of his frequent visits to Paris, in company with Mr. Armstrong, on the affairs of the South Kensington Museum, in a letter to his daughter at the end of that January. They crossed together on a stormy moonlit night, "so that we could see the waves at any rate, and they were very fine indeed. We slept on the road to Paris after a fashion, but it was so cold that it was a sort of dog-sleep, and the inn-room, and wood-fire and coffee and rolls were sweet to us when we got there. Armstrong took me to dine at a simple place he knew, where we were welcome and paid but moderately: by the way, seeing *goujons* on the bill, I insisted on having them, and very good they were. The trees in the Tuileries gardens have suffered very much even since we were there: it is sad to see, for I remember when I first came to Paris and was high up aloft with Aunt Henrietta at Meurice's they were so thick they looked as if you could walk on their tops. We were very busy over our proper business both days, but managed to see the Cluny, being close by; also a new Museum of casts of Gothic sculpture at the

Trocadéro, very interesting. As to the sale we were beat, a sort of French S.K.M. bought the things over our heads, but Armstrong thinks he can borrow the best book of the pattern books, which was very good, had a lot of old Indian and Persian printed cloths in it."

Of Morris's first appearance at a meeting of the Democratic Federation the following account is given by Mr. Scheu:

"In the early winter months of 1883 the Democratic Federation had arranged some meetings at the Westminster Palace Chambers. I attended the first of those meetings (I forget the exact date), Mr. Hyndman in the chair. The order of the day was the passing of some resolutions on the question of education, normal working-day, and the housing of the working classes. The business had scarcely been started when Banner, who sat behind me, passed me a slip of paper, 'The third man to your right is William Morris.' I had read of but never seen Morris before, and I looked at once in the direction given. I was struck by Morris's fine face, his earnestness, the half searching, half dreamy look of his eyes, and his plain and comely dress.

"When the resolution *re* artisans' dwellings was proposed, I rose and took exception to the notion that only artisans needed rational dwellings, and proposed to alter the wording into 'people's dwellings.' The amendment was frowned upon by the chair, but when Morris got up and seconded it with a few sympathetic words, it was carried almost unanimously."

That random shot—for such perhaps it was—struck home: for it was characteristic of Morris to welcome with almost exaggerated gratitude any remark from a stranger that pointed towards the same conclusions to

which his own lonely thoughts had led him. The amendment was meant to protest against limiting the movement in favour of better dwellings to the class of skilled workmen. But to Morris the necessity of rational dwellings for the rich no less than the poor was a primary article of belief. "I have at least respect for the dwellers in the tub of Diogenes; indeed I don't look upon it as so bad a house after all. I have seen worse houses to let for £700 a year." So he said afterwards with perfect sincerity, and the housing of the rich was to him one of the most distressing features of modern civilization.

At the same meeting "Rowland, for whom we voted for our School Board," Morris writes, "was there, and spoke hugely to my liking; advocated street-preaching of our doctrines as the real practical method: wisely to my mind, since those who suffer (more than we, or they, can tell) from society as it is, are so many, and those who have conceived any hope that it may be changed are so few." This belief, to which he clung against hope for several years, had momentous consequences in his life; for in the task of street-preaching outdoors, and work equivalent to street-preaching indoors, he broke down his health, and to some extent wore away the keen edge of his mind. But for the moment the new task seemed to lend him additional vigour. A month later there is a glimpse of him in the first flush of his enterprise in an entry from a private diary:

"Feb. 22. At Ned's. Top came in to breakfast as usual on Sundays: was extremely brilliant as soon as he had shaken off a little drooping of spirits owing to bad news about Jenny: was very angry against Seddon for replacing old Hammersmith Church ('a harmless silly old thing') by such an excrescence.

He was bubbling over with Karl Marx, whom he had just begun to read in French. He praised Robert Owen immensely. He had been giving an address to a Clerkenwell Radical Club—found the members 'eager to learn but dreadfully ignorant.' 'All Socialists are agreed as to education.' Finely explosive against railways. Some imitation-Morris wall-paper was 'a mangy gherkin on a horse-dung ground.' Spent the evening at Top's—a long talk on birds: T.'s knowledge of them very extensive: can go on for hours about their habits: but especially about their form."

About the same time Morris wrote to Mr. T. C. Horsfall, who had made his acquaintance four years earlier in connexion with the formation of the Manchester Art Museum:

"I think on reflection that I have not much to add to what I have written in my little book" ("Hopes and Fears for Art"). "I have, as you will note, guarded myself against the imputation of wishing to get rid of all rough work. I would only get rid as much as possible of all nasty and stupid work, and what is left I would divide as equitably as might be among all classes.

"You see it was not necessary in my lectures to tell people that I am in principle a Socialist, and would be so in practice if there should ever in my lifetime turn up an occasion for action: add to this fact that I have a religious hatred to all war and violence, and you have the reason for my speaking and writing on subjects of art. I mean that I have done it as seed for the goodwill and justice that *may* make it possible for the next great revolution, which will be a social one, to work itself out without violence being an essential part of it."

But economy of truth was never a thing possible for Morris, and any advance in his own views was reflected immediately in his public as much as in his private utterances. On the 6th of March he gave an address on "Art, Wealth, and Riches" at the Manchester Royal Institution, in which the Socialist doctrine was so pronounced as to meet with much hostile criticism. On the theory of art people were willing to hear him gladly, much as they would hear a preacher from the pulpit on the theory of religion. They would even to some degree consent to translate his doctrine into practice in the decoration of their houses. But when he attacked the structure and basis of the life they led in these houses, there were murmurs of alarm and resentment. "Does not that raise another question than one of mere art?" they asked in perplexity or indignation. To a letter in the Manchester Examiner which put the question in these specific words Morris took the opportunity to reply thus:

"It was the purpose of my lecture to raise another question than one of mere art. I specially wished to point out that the question of popular art was a social question, involving the happiness or misery of the greater part of the community. The absence of popular art from modern times is more disquieting and grievous to bear for this reason than for any other, that it betokens that fatal division of men into the cultivated and the degraded classes which competitive commerce has bred and fosters; popular art has no chance of a healthy life, or, indeed, of a life at all, till we are on the way to fill up this terrible gulf between riches and poverty. Doubtless many things will go to filling it up, and if art must be one of those things, let it go. What business have we with art at all unless all can share it? I am not afraid but that art will rise from the dead,

whatever else lies there. For, after all, what is the true end and aim of all politics and all commerce? Is it not to bring about a state of things in which all men may live at peace and free from over-burdensome anxiety, provided with work which is pleasant to them and produces results useful to their neighbours?

"It may well be a burden to the conscience of an honest man who lives a more manlike life to think of the innumerable lives which are spent in toil unrelieved by hope and uncheered by praise; men who might as well, for all the good they are doing to their neighbours by their work, be turning a crank with nothing at the end of it; but this is the fate of those who are working at the bidding of blind competitive commerce, which still persists in looking at itself as an end, and not as a means.

"It has been this burden on my conscience, I do in all sincerity believe, which has urged me on to speak of popular art in Manchester and elsewhere. I could never forget that in spite of all drawbacks my work is little else than pleasure to me; that under no conceivable circumstances would I give it up even if I could. Over and over again have I asked myself why should not my lot be the common lot. My work is simple work enough; much of it, nor that the least pleasant, any man of decent intelligence could do, if he could but get to care about the work and its results. Indeed I have been ashamed when I have thought of the contrast between my happy working hours and the unpraised, unrewarded, monotonous drudgery which most men are condemned to. Nothing shall convince me that such labour as this is good or necessary to civilization."

Of Merton Abbey and his work going on there he writes to his daughter on the 28th of February. The

tapestry of the Goose-Girl, from a design by Mr. Walter Crane, was the first figure-subject executed at Merton on the high-warp loom. It was succeeded by the Flora and Pomona pieces, in which the figures were designed by Burne-Jones.

"At Merton there are some daffodils out already. The almond tree is blossoming there beautifully: some of these fine days the place *has* looked pretty, the water sparkling among the twigs. We are getting tidy now, but haven't quite cleared up about the big filtering bed, which still wants something doing to it, as the tail was red with madder the other day. We are not getting on quite as fast as we should with the printing; it is very tough work getting everything in due order, the cloths seem to want so much doing to them before they can be printed, and then so much doing to them after they are printed. We have had a grand cleaning of the blue Persian carpet at Merton. My word, wasn't it dirty: caked with dirt: it looks very much better, the pattern being quite plain to see except just at the end for about a foot. I was frightened though at first: for after we first put it into the river it cockled up like a sheet of crumpled paper, the cotton warp shrinking with the wet. I thought my £80 had gone down the Wandle: but all came right when it was dry. In about a fortnight we shall have finished the Goose-Girl tapestry: Uncle Ned has done me two lovely figures for tapestry, but I have got to design a background for them; I shall probably bring that down next time I come for my holiday task. Tell dear May that I have devoted about twenty minutes to the lace—it is a drawback to have to be always washing one's hands for a fidgety person like me. Neither have I done much to the Shah Nameh: you see the lecture has swallowed up my literary time."

Under the pressure of opposition which, at Manchester and elsewhere, he was now beginning to feel, a hardening of his tone about this time begins to be perceptible. "I am tired of being mealy-mouthed," he breaks out in a letter. In April he was lecturing regularly, "preaching my sermon" as he calls it, in different parts of London, and becoming more plain-spoken in each fresh draft of his message. In May he was put, rather against his will, on the executive of the Democratic Federation; "so I am in for more work. However I don't like belonging to a body without knowing what they are doing. Without feeling very sanguine about their doings, they seem certainly to mean something; money is chiefly lacking, as usual."

To meet this lack of money among a small and struggling group of enthusiasts, the drain on his own resources was already heavy, and became heavier as time went on. "*You* have no revolution on hand on which to spend your money," he wrote to Ellis in the same week. "By the way," he adds, suddenly turning to another and an earlier interest, "the May-fly does not visit Wandle: they are eating the alder and the cocktail now. Wardle got a fish (not in our water) on Monday evening, a 2 lb., I heard." Himself now he found no time for fishing or for any relaxation. The absorption of his time by his new work amounted to two full working-days, besides odd evenings, out of every week. "I haven't had two consecutive hours to call my own since I saw you three weeks ago," he writes to Mrs. Burne-Jones later in the summer; "my time has been a mere heap of chopped straw."

So far as concerns his attitude at this point towards politics and the ideas of that middle class which he had not yet renounced, two long and clearly reasoned

letters written this summer to Mr. C. E. Maurice give his thought fully and frankly.

"Kelmscott House,
"June 22, 1883.

"Dear Mr. Maurice,

"I think you might be able to help a friend of mine with advice in the following case: A poor woman comes to her asking for a ticket for her son for the Consumptive Hospital: son obviously ill, but *not* with consumption: woman herself ill, sore throat and out-of-sorts: husband ill also; very bad smell in the house; the rent-collector, or landlord, when asked to mend matters by the tenant, won't do anything; won't even give his address; inspector when written to by tenant don't answer: Can you tell me who is the proper inspector or board to apply to? and forgive my troubling you on such a simple question.

"I should have been glad to have continued our conversation last Friday night; as I so much desire to convert all disinterested people of good will to what I should call active and general Socialism, and to have their help: I think that you, like myself, have really been a Socialist for a long time, and I know you have done your best, as you would be sure to do, to carry out your views. For my part I used to think that one might further real Socialistic progress by doing what one could on the lines of ordinary middle-class Radicalism: I have been driven of late into the conclusion that I was mistaken; that Radicalism is on the wrong line, so to say, and will never develope into anything more than Radicalism: in fact that it is made for and by the middle classes and will always be under the control of rich capitalists: they will have no objection to its *political* development, if they think

they can stop it there: but as to real social changes, they will not allow them if they can help it: you may see almost any day such phrases as "this is the proper way to stop the spread of Socialism" in the Liberal papers, the writer of the phrase never having taken the trouble to find out what Socialism meant, and also choosing to ignore the discontent, dumb indeed for the most part, which is widely spread even in England. Meantime I can see no use in people having political freedom unless they use it as an instrument for leading reasonable and manlike lives; no good even in education if, when they are educated, people have only slavish work to do, and have to live lives too much beset with sordid anxiety for them to be able to think and feel with the more fortunate people who produced art and poetry and great thought. This release from slavery it is clear cannot come to people so long as they are subjected to the bare subsistence wages which are a necessity of competitive commerce; and I cannot help thinking that the workmen will be soon finding out that for ourselves: it is certain that Henry George's book has been received in this country and in America as a new Gospel: I believe that Socialism is advancing, and will advance more and more as education spreads, and so believing, find my duty clear to do my best to further its advance, and in the same time, in what poor way I can, to soften the ruggedness, and refine the coarseness which centuries of oppression have hammered into it, so to say.

"A word about the Democratic Federation: as far as I know it is the only active Socialist organization in England: under the above mentioned circumstances therefore I found myself bound to join it, although I had heard beforehand (to speak plainly) that it was a sort of Tory drag to take the scent off

the fox. From all I can hear I believe that to be a calumny: or, to speak English, one of those curious lies for which no one seems responsible, but which stick very tight to the object they are thrown at. However that may be, I cannot see how a Society which has declared openly for Socialism, including Land Nationalization, can serve the Tory cause, whatever the Tory intention may be: for the rest, from what I can see of their proceedings the Executive seem to me to mean work; and if their opinions hurt the Liberal party (where is it by the way?) it is the fault of the Liberal party for allowing itself to stiffen into Whiggery or practical Toryism, as it seems to me it is fast doing.

"I won't make any excuses for this long letter, as I know you are deeply interested in the matter, and I believe your uprightness of thought will see through my clumsy sentences into what I have in my mind.

"I am, dear Mr. Maurice,

"Yours faithfully,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

"Kelmscott House,

"July 1st, 1883.

"Dear Mr. Maurice,

"I am sitting down to write my promised letter to you, but to begin with find it somewhat difficult to do more than define my own position a little more than I did in my last. You see I think we differ to start with in this, that you think that the present system of Society has certain hitches in it; certain wrongs resulting from blunders persisted in, till they have become very difficult to deal with, but which hitches and blunders are removable, and when removed will leave us a society which can be kept straight by

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careful attention to the general duties of good citizenship. I confess I go much further than that: true it is that I cannot help trying to remove obvious anomalies or helping what I can to palliate the effects of the obstinate blunders which we both see, but I do so with little hope, because I believe that the whole basis of Society, with its contrasts of rich and poor, is incurably vicious: I might be content that the change which I think must come about before this can be righted should be a gradual one—or say I *must* be content; but I do not see that those who are at the head of the political advance have any intention of making a real change in the social basis: for them it seems a part of the necessary and eternal order of things that the present supply and demand Capitalist system should last for ever; though the system of citizen and chattel slave under which the ancient civilizations lived, which no doubt once seemed also necessary and eternal, had to give place, after a long period of violence and anarchy, to the feudal system of seigneur and serf; which in its turn, though once thought necessary and eternal, has been swept away in favour of our present contract system between rich and poor. Of course I don't do you the injustice to suppose that you defend the finality of any system, but I am quite clear that the ordinary Radical of to-day does do so, and there I join issue with him.

"Also of course, I do not believe in the world being saved by any system,—I only assert the necessity of attacking systems grown corrupt, and no longer leading anywhither: that to my mind is the case with the present system of capital and labour: as all my lectures assert, I have personally been gradually driven to the conclusion that art has been handcuffed by it, and will die out of civilization if the system lasts. That

of itself does to me carry with it the condemnation of the whole system, and I admit has been the thing which has drawn my attention to the subject in general: but furthermore in looking into matters social and political I have but one rule, that in thinking of the condition of any body of men I should ask myself, 'How could you bear it yourself? what would you feel if you were poor against the system under which you live?' I have always been uneasy when I had to ask myself that question, and of late years I have had to ask it so often, that I have seldom had it out of my mind: and the answer to it has more and more made me ashamed of my own position, and more and more made me feel that if I had not been born rich or well-to-do I should have found my position *un*endurable, and should have been a mere rebel against what would have seemed to me a system of robbery and injustice. Nothing can argue me out of this feeling, which I say plainly is a matter of religion to me: the contrasts of rich and poor are unendurable and ought not to be endured by either rich or poor. Now it seems to me that, feeling this, I am bound to act for the destruction of the system which seems to me mere oppression and obstruction; such a system can only be destroyed, it seems to me, by the united discontent of numbers; isolated acts of a few persons of the middle and upper classes seeming to me (as I have said before) quite powerless against it: in other words the antagonism of classes, which the system has bred, is the natural and necessary instrument of its destruction. My aim therefore being to spread discontent among all classes, I feel myself bound to join any organization whose object seemed to me really to further this aim: nor in doing so should I be much troubled by consideration of who the leaders of such

an organization might be, always supposing that one believes them genuine in their support of certain *principles*. It has always seemed to me that the worship of leaders has been a sign of the lifelessness of ordinary Radicalism of late, and that opinion has received fresh confirmation in my mind by last year's events in Ireland and Egypt (especially the latter, where the Liberal 'leaders' 'led' the party into mere Jingoism).

"But further I earnestly wish that the middle classes, to whom hitherto I have personally addressed myself, should look to all these matters, and become discontented also, as they certainly should be, since they themselves suffer from the same system which oppresses the poor; their lives made barren and dull by it; their hopes for a higher standard of life repressed: besides I am quite sure that the change which will overthrow our present system will come sooner or later: on the middle classes to a great extent it depends whether it will come peaceably or violently. If they can only learn the uselessness of mere overplus money, the poisonousness of luxury to all civilization, they will not be so likely to cry out 'confiscation and robbery and injustice' at a system which, while it proposes to give to every man what he really *needs*, will have no call to take from any man what he can really *use*: in short, what we of the middle classes have to do, if we can, is to show by our lives what is the proper type of a useful citizen, the type into which all classes should melt at last. I remember a little time ago meeting a clever man in a train who enlarged (without letting me get a word in edgewise) on the woes of the middle class, and how they suffered in comparison with the pampered working classes. I am sorry to say that I was not ready enough to say to him what I afterwards thought: 'my friend, if you would only allow yourself

to become a member of this pampered working class, then would all your woes be at an end, by your own showing.' His line of argument is common enough, and is founded on the assumption that one class must be masters of the other: but to my mind no man is good enough to be any one's master without injuring himself at least, whatever he does for the servant. Well, I don't know if I have explained myself at all; I daresay I haven't, but I have told you of certain things which were on my mind; and you will at least see that I am your ally in trying to deal with the lives of our own class.

"I much agree with what you say about the shop-keeping class, and think with you that they have been very unjustly scolded at for a position which they cannot help, and which is I know very often hard enough for them: whatever political grievances they lack, I think they have a social grievance heavy enough: for instance, the more refined classes do usually assume in their dealings with them that they will as a matter of course cheat the buyer, though all the while the buyer is eager for what he calls a 'bargain,' *i.e.*, that he should cheat the seller. Doesn't this bring home to us all the waste and disgrace which is the essence of our present system of Commercial War?

"Well, I have spun you a very long yarn, and have not attempted to answer your objections directly; because I saw from your letter that you could not be expected to join in such a Society as ours at present, though I cannot help thinking that you one day will take some such step.

"Meantime I have begun a little essay on the subject you were good enough to suggest to me: when it is finished I will send it you, and if you approve of it I would read it somewhere and be prepared to answer

further questions on the subject—which however I cannot help feeling will eventually lead us back to Socialism by another road.

"By the way a friend sent me Hampstead paper cuttings, containing 1st, an irate letter from some one who was 'touched up' by my lecture; and 2nd, a very handsome answer to him by yourself, for which I thank you heartily, especially as it made clear to me that you quite understood what I had been saying on that occasion. You must remember by the way again that I was sent by the Democratic Federation to lecture there; so I thought I was acting within my rights in distributing their circular, and speaking for them.

"I am, dear Mr. Maurice,

"Yours faithfully,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

In more touching and intimate words he wrote on the 21st of August to Mrs. Burne-Jones, who had made a renewed effort to urge him back to writing poetry:

"I am touched by your kind anxiety about my poetry; but you see, my dear, there is first of all my anxiety, which I am bound to confess has made a sad coward of me; and then, though I admit that I am a conceited man, yet I really don't think anything I have done (when I consider it as I should another man's work) of any value except to myself: except as showing my sympathy with history and the like. Poetry goes with the hand-arts I think, and like them has now become unreal: the arts have got to die, what is left of them, before they can be born again. You know my views on the matter; I apply them to myself as well as to others. This would not, I admit, prevent my writing poetry any more than it prevents my doing

my pattern work, because the mere personal pleasure of it urges one to the work; but it prevents my looking at it as a sacred duty, and the grief aforesaid is too strong and disquieting to be overcome by a mere inclination to do what I *know* is unimportant work. Meantime the propaganda gives me work to do, which, unimportant as it seems, is part of a great whole which cannot be lost, and that ought to be enough for me."

Within the ranks of the Democratic Federation meanwhile, which had set out so gaily to conquer working-class opinion and use it as a lever against the established order of things, disruptive tendencies were already showing themselves, and its middle-class leaders were already beginning to mistrust one another. "I am like enough to have some trouble over my propagandist work," Morris writes at the end of August, "let alone that I am in for a many lectures: for small as our body is, we are not without dissensions in it. Some of the more ardent disciples look upon Hyndman as too opportunist, and there is truth in that; he is sanguine of speedy change happening somehow, and is inclined to intrigue and the making of a party; towards which end compromise is needed, and the carrying people who don't really agree with us as far as they will go. As you know, I am not sanguine, and think the aim of Socialists should be the founding of a religion, towards which end compromise is no use, and we only want to have those with us who will be with us to the end. But then again, if the zealots don't take care they will blow the whole thing to the winds; all the more as the religious or theological difficulty is on us, or threatening to be so. In the midst of all this I find myself drifting into the disgraceful position of a moderator and patcher up, which is much against my inclination.

"Meantime it is obvious that the support to be looked for for constructive Socialism from the working classes at present is nought. Who can wonder, as things now are, when the lower classes are really lower? Of vague discontent and a spirit of revenge for the degradation in which they are kept there is plenty I think, but that seems all. What we want is real leaders themselves working men, and content to be so till classes are abolished. But you see when a man has gifts for that kind of thing he finds himself tending to rise out of his class before he has begun to think of class politics as a matter of principle, and too often he is just simply 'got at' by the governing classes, not formally, but by circumstances I mean. Education is the word doubtless; but then in comes the commercial system and defends itself against that in a terrible unconscious way with the struggle for bread, and lack of leisure, and squalid housing—and there we go, round and round the circle still."

It was not only the business of moderating and patching up that was now beginning, but the equally endless task of explaining to a quite light-hearted and careless world distinctions which perpetually became more crucial as their scope was narrowed, but which those beyond the circle could never be induced to see as distinctions at all. "The manifesto spoken of in to-day's Daily News," he wearily writes, "is not ours; nor is it Social Democratic, which is what we are, but Anarchist. We consider them dangerous; for you see they have no programme but destruction, whereas we are reconstructive. People in general are quite ignorant of the whole matter."

At the beginning of September he wrote the first of those hymns of the new movement which were issued under the title of "Chants for Socialists." The fine

and stirring verses, entitled "The Day is Coming," are included in the volume of "Poems by the Way." In sending a copy of the newly-written poem to Mrs. Burne-Jones he once more recurs to the objection, urged by her and by many of those whose sympathy he sought to enlist, that education was the primary necessity, and that it was hopeless to attempt to reconstruct society with the existing materials.

"As to the D. F., you need not be anxious about me. I went into the affair quite with my eyes open, and suspecting worse things of it than are likely to happen: for you understand I by no means suppose Hyndman or any of the leaders not to be in earnest, though I may not always agree with them. I naturally find it harder work to understand the subject of Socialism in detail now I am alongside it, and often get beaten in argument when I know all the same I am really in the right: but of course this only means more study. Every one who has thought over the matter must feel your dilemma about education; but think of many not uneducated people that you know, and you will I am sure see that education will not cure people of the grossest social selfishness and tyranny unless Socialistic principles form part of it. Meantime I am sure it is right, whatever the apparent consequences may be, to stir up the lower classes (damn the word) to demand a higher standard of life for themselves, not merely for themselves or for the sake of the material comfort it will bring, but for the good of the whole world and the regeneration of the conscience of man: and this stirring up is part of the necessary education which must in good truth go before the reconstruction of society: but I repeat that without laying before people this reconstruction, our education will but breed tyrants and cowards, big, little

and least, down to the smallest who can screw out money from standing by to see another man working for him.

"The one thing I want you to be clear about is that I *cannot help* acting in the matter, and associating myself with any body which has the root of the matter; and you know, and it may ease your kind heart respecting me, that those who are in the thick of it, and trying to do something, are not likely to feel so much of the hope deferred which hangs about the cause as onlookers do."

In the same spirit, though from a somewhat different position, and in a rather more militant tone, he wrote about the same time to Mr. Horsfall:

"I have long felt sure that commercialism must be attacked at the root before we can be on the road for those improvements in life which you and I so much desire. A society which is founded on the system of *compelling* all well-to-do people to live on making the greatest possible profit out of the labour of others, must be wrong. For it means the perpetuating the division of society into civilized and uncivilized classes: I am far from being an anarchist, but even anarchy is better than this, which is in fact anarchy and despotism mixed: if there is no hope of conquering this—let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.

"Of course I do not discuss these matters with you or any person of good will in any bitterness of spirit: but there are people with whom it is hard to keep one's temper; such as the philistine middle-class Radical; who think, or pretend to, that now at last all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds."

"I am working at lectures and chintz-patterns hard," he writes a fortnight later; "perhaps poems will come too." But this was hardly meant seriously, or if it was,

represented a momentary lapse from the tension up to which he had worked himself, and which his new colleagues naturally took no pains to relieve. At the end of October Mr. Charles Rowley, who was then still personally unknown to him, though it only needed a first meeting to make them friends, had written to ask him to come to Manchester and give a Sunday lecture to the Ancoats Brotherhood. Morris's reply was prompt and straight:

"Kelmscott House,
"Oct. 25th, 1883.

"My dear Sir,

"I have only one subject to lecture on, the relation of Art to Labour: also I am an open and declared Socialist, or to be more specific, Collectivist, and whatever I say would be coloured by my opinions on these matters: if you think under these circumstances a lecture from me would come within the scope of your scheme, and be acceptable as an expression of opinions for which of course you would not be responsible, I should be very happy to be one of those who lecture to you.

"I am, dear Sir,
"Yours faithfully,
"WILLIAM MORRIS."

Mr. Rowley was not frightened by this reply: and the lecture which Morris gave was the first of many that he delivered in the New Islington Hall at Ancoats, and the beginning of an intimate cordiality and affection between the two men.

The manifesto of the Democratic Federation, issued in June and signed by Morris together with the rest of the Executive Committee, had gone far in advance of

anything that was in his mind, or in the minds of most of his colleagues, when he had joined it at the beginning of the year. For the rapid development of doctrine there were several causes, any of them sufficient. In an association which is itself formed by the detachment of the Extreme Left (to use the convenient French term) of a great party, the inevitable tendency is to become more and more extremist. Waverers relapse on to the main body, and the control of the movement passes more and more into the hands of enthusiasts. Such a situation gives a terrible power to logic. Friends and enemies alike are quick to detect and eager to pounce upon inconsistencies; and in human affairs, inconsistency can only be avoided by falling back from compromise after compromise to the extreme limit of abstract theory. Nor does the evil stop here. As an abstract logic becomes more and more the dominant guiding force, the refined distinctions to which logic lends itself become articles of faith over which divisions are multiplied. The more a party holding extreme doctrines defines the consequences of its principles; the more it purges itself of the ambiguities of an unformulated creed and the inconsistencies of moderate opinion: the more violent does the conflict become among the remnant left, on points that have only arisen in the course of argument. The path between right-hand heats and extremes and left-hand defections is always narrowing. In the seventeenth chapter of "The Heart of Midlothian" the master-hand of Scott has drawn an imperishable picture of the disintegration that ensues, and the loss, first of moving power on the world without, and then of vital energy within, that has overtaken so many kingdoms of the Saints. The world takes its own way, regardless of logic, impatient of theory, merciless to failure: nor is it until the years

have heaped their dust over the asperities of the conflict that understanding comes with pity. Yet in the simple faith of such a despised remnant, and not in the facile contempt of the majority, may have lain that seed of spiritual ardour which has kept the soul of man alive.

On the same day that Morris declared himself an open Socialist with only one subject on which he could give public utterance, he wrote to Mr. Horsfall in reply to a letter of anxious and amazed questioning:

"In few words what I have to say about the manifesto is, that, though I may not like the taste of some of the wording, I do agree with the substance of it (or I should not have signed it). This does not however prevent me from agreeing with you that the rich do not act as they do in the matter from malice. Nevertheless their position (as a class) forces them to 'strive' (unconsciously most often I know) to keep the working men in ignorance of their rights and their power.

"Where I think I differ from you of the means whereby revolution may be attained is this: if I do not misrepresent your views, you think that *individuals* of good will belonging to all classes can, if they be numerous and strenuous enough, bring about the change: I on the contrary think that the basis of all change must be, as it has always been, the antagonism of classes: I mean that though here and there a few men of the upper and middle classes, moved by their conscience and insight, may and doubtless will throw in their lot with the working classes, the upper and middle classes as a body will by the very nature of their existence, and like a plant grows, resist the abolition of classes: neither do I think that any amelioration of the condition of the poor on the only lines which the rich *can* go upon will advance us on the road; save

that it will put more power into the hands of the lower class and so strengthen both their discontent and their means of showing it: for I do not believe that starvelings can bring about a revolution. I do not say that there is not a terrible side to this: but how can it be otherwise? Commercialism, competition, has sown the wind recklessly, and must reap the whirlwind: it has created the proletariat for its own interest, and its creation will and must destroy it: there is no other force which can do so. For my part I have never under-rated the power of the middle classes, whom, in spite of their individual good nature and banality, I look upon as a most terrible and implacable force: so terrible that I think it not unlikely that their resistance to inevitable change may, if the beginnings of change are too long delayed, ruin all civilization for a time. Meantime I must tell you that among the discontented, discontent unlighted by hope is in many places taking the form of a passionate desire for mere anarchy, so that it becomes a pressing duty for those who, not believing in the stability of the present system, have any hopes for the future, to lay before the world those hopes founded on *constructive* revolution."

An opportunity soon occurred for him to announce his attitude more dramatically to a larger audience. In November he had been invited to Oxford to give an address to the Russell Club, a society of Liberal undergraduates with a tendency towards the newer developments of Radicalism. Social questions, under the stimulating influence of Arnold Toynbee and his disciples, had at that time risen to the first place among the intellectual interests of younger Oxford. Toynbee's recent death had only given a fresh impulse to the movement. The so-called University Settlements were in the air. Social reform was the current

subject of discussion in College debating societies and filled the pages of the Oxford magazines. Mr. Henry George had lectured at Oxford in support of his scheme of land nationalization, and had been received with a studied incivility which aroused a strong reaction in his favour.

The authorities, always willing to follow the lead of any strong undergraduate feeling, and not averse from allowing the new movement to spend its force in vague discussion, threw no obstacles in the way of the meeting. When Morris accepted the invitation of the Russell Club, the hall of University College was lent to them for the evening. The title announced for the address was "Democracy and Art"; two subjects not obviously explosive when brought into contact. The College hall was crowded, and all went smoothly till at the end of his address Morris boldly passed from theoretic ground, announced that he spoke as the agent of a Socialist body, and appealed to his audience to join it. The platform sat aghast; and the Master of University at once rose to explain that the College when they lent their hall had not known that Mr. Morris was the agent of any Socialist propaganda, and that all they had meant was to give to an eminent man the opportunity of expressing his opinions on art under a democracy: "a subject with which" (so the report of the meeting gives Dr. Bright's words) "he was unusually well acquainted, and a knowledge of which, in the existing condition of social questions in England, was a most desirable part of the education of every young man."

For the misunderstanding, if misunderstanding there were, Morris at all events was in no way to blame. He had taken the utmost pains to explain his position clearly before he came. To Faulkner, through whom

as one of the Fellows the request for the use of the College hall had been made, he had written as follows on the 23rd of October. The original proposal had been that he and Mr. Hyndman should both speak; but Mr. Hyndman's doctrines were known to be revolutionary, and the methods he advocated were believed to be violent.

"As to Hyndman lecturing in your hall I would ask you to lay before the Master the fact that I am quite as much a Socialist as he is; that I am an officer of the same Association, and am distinctly going to lecture as a delegate from it: also that if the subject is to be stirred at all, it is surely worth while to listen to a man who is capable of giving a definite exposition of the whole doctrine. I am rather anxious about this matter, as if Hyndman is shut up I shall feel rather like a fool, and as if I were there on false pretences. For the rest, Hyndman is an educated man if Trin: Coll: Camb: is capable of educating (which is doubtful), and though he is perhaps not as polite as the Devil is usually said to be, is at least politer than I am: neither has he horns and hoofs, as I am prepared to swear: neither (as a Secretary of the S. P. A. B.) will I allow him to blow up any *old* building in Oxford. Would it be any good my writing to the Master stating these facts in conventional language; and also stating what seems to me to be true, that people do seem just at this moment to want to know something about Socialism? though to tell you the truth I misdoubt me that that may be but a passing wind of fashion."

"We must leave the matter in the hands of the Russell Club," he wrote to Faulkner again on the 25th; "I have undertaken to give my lecture and will not back out of it, but will deliver it where they

think advisable. Please to thank the Master on my behalf when you see him; I don't doubt he has done his best for us."

Notwithstanding these repeated explanations, the College authorities appear to have been possessed by the fixed idea that Morris, as a man of means and a man of letters, could not be a Socialist in the same sense as his colleagues; and they persisted, with a sort of obstinate innocence, in believing that his address would be confined to generalities which could do no harm. When they found that he had really meant what he said, their feeling was one which approached consternation. The meeting had, at all events, a success of scandal, and henceforth Morris was widely known as a declared Socialist.

In spite of all his labours as a peacemaker the year ended gloomily for him. The party had got rid of its moderate members. It had modified its name to that of the Social Democratic Federation in order to make its position as a Socialist body quite clear. It was about to start a weekly newspaper for the purpose of spreading its doctrines among the working classes. But internally it was already a distracted chaos. "I went to Merton for a little time on Thursday," says Morris's last letter of the year, "and found all well there. Now I'm off to see Fitzgerald (that's our editor) about 'Justice,' the prospects of which I am not sanguine over. The fact is, we really want a good steady business man over the D. F. affairs: a man who could give up most of his time and who wouldn't be excitable. For lack of it I fear we shall fall to pieces. I am much worried by the whole business just now: but in any case I shall try to save something out of the fire and keep a few together."

Throughout 1884 this desperate work of mingled

proselytizing and patching up went on unceasingly. In January "he can talk about little else, and will brook no opposition." For a time there was almost a breach between him and several of his older friends. "I was rather disconcerted," one of them has recorded, "when I found that an honest objection to Bulgarian atrocities had been held to be one and the same thing as sympathy with Karl Marx, and that Morris took it for granted that I should be ready for enrolment." Just at present Morris had quite lost his capacity for good-humoured argument. "I have a dim recollection," says Mr. William De Morgan, "of a discussion on Socialism which ended in a scheme for the complete reconstruction of society exactly as it is now, so as to meet the views of both revolutionaries and Conservatives: however, this was in the earlier days of Socialism—as he got more engrossed in the subject, this sort of chat became less and less possible."

The first number of the weekly paper of the Democratic Federation, "Justice: the Organ of the Social Democracy," appeared on the 9th of January. Besides practically paying out of his own pocket for the weekly deficit in its balance sheet, Morris contributed articles to one-half of the numbers which appeared up to the end of December. These contributions included three more of the "Chants for Socialists," and one brief article on that year's exhibition of the Royal Academy, expanded by him in a longer paper which was published in the July number of the secularist magazine "To-day." Like the single piece of literary criticism he had printed twenty-eight years earlier, this single piece of art criticism is more interesting as a fragment of unstudied autobiography than from its remarks on the special works singled out for praise or blame. A few sentences from it are

worth quoting as summing up in brief and incisive words the view he held, and had held all his life, of the function and excellence of the painter's art.

"In considering such an exhibition it is necessary to have a clear idea of what the aims of a painter should be. Something like this, I think, will embrace them all: 1st. The embodiment in art of some vision which has forced itself on the artist's brain. 2nd. The creation of some lovely combination of colour and form. 3rd. The setting forth a faithful portraiture of some beautiful, characteristic, or historical place, or of some living person worthy to be so portrayed; in either case so as to be easily recognizable by a careless observer, and yet to have a reserve of more intimate facts for a careful one. 4th. Mastery over material; the production of a finished and workmanlike piece, as perfect in all ways as the kind of work admits of.

"Success in any of the three first of these aims, *together with the last*, will give a picture existence as a work of art. Most pictures that impress us seriously have achieved success in more than one of the three joined to the fourth, while great works of art have all the four qualities united, yet in due subordination to the master one of them, whichever it may be, which produces the greatest impression on us; this subordination is what is meant by the word 'style.'

"Skill of execution is the first thing we must seek for, since without it a picture is incapable of expressing anything, is a failure and not a picture. Well, there are signs here and there on the walls of the Academy of skill of a certain kind, but what does it amount to? does it give us any reasonable hope of establishing by our present method of artistic life a workmanlike traditional skill, continuous and progres-

sive, so that while there may be hope for a man of genius for pushing forward the standard of excellence, no one, be he of genius or not, need waste half the energies of his life in half-fruitless individual experiments, the results of which he cannot pass on to others? What signs are there of collective skill, the skill of the school, which nurses moderate talent and sets genius free? Scanty signs indeed: at best a plausible appearance of workmanlike execution, a low kind of skill which manages to get through the job, but in so dull and joyless a way that one's eye almost refuses to rest upon the canvas, or one's brain to take in any idea it may strive to express. That is all, I fear, that can claim to represent anything like traditional workmanlike skill. What other skill of execution is visible is chiefly, almost entirely, an amateur-like cleverness, experimental, uncertain, never successful in accomplishing a real work, in expressing a fact or an imagination simply and straightforwardly, but often enough succeeding in thrusting itself forward and attracting attention to itself as something dashing, clever, and —useless; the end, not the means. Of this kind of skill there is a good deal; and to speak plainly it is on this quality, such as it is, that most of the pictures must rest their claim to attention."

Lecturing, in and out of London, had now become his most serious occupation. At Manchester he mournfully notes that "the workmen seem on the whole to identify themselves with the middle classes." Elsewhere "there was a funny old ex-Chartist present, an old man of seventy; he said it made him feel twenty years younger." At Edinburgh "a very good audience, and we fished two additional members, not much you will say, but things go slowly." Bradford, Leeds, Blackburn, Leicester, Glasgow, were among

the other provincial centres where he gave these addresses. "I am in a hurry, as I always am now," is one unusual, and coming from him, even pathetic sentence in a letter. In March, writing to Faulkner about the formation of a branch of the Federation at Oxford, he expresses in a few strong words the uncompromising attitude he had taken up towards those who sympathized and hesitated, or whose tenets did not wholly coincide with his own. A number of liberal Churchmen—most of them belonging to the advanced High Church party in matters of ritual and doctrine—had once more taken up the Christian Socialism of Maurice and Kingsley. "Meantime," he comments, "the Christian *Church* has always declared against Socialism; its mainstays must always be property and authority. A worthy Irish Catholic member of the S.D.F. resigned on those grounds when we declared for Socialism. Of course as long as people are ignorant, compromise *plus* sentiment always looks better to them than the real article."

In April the weekly evening at Burne-Jones's house, which had been the habit of so many years, finally ceased, crowded out by the multiplicity of new engagements. The one gleam of real pleasure that the year brought him was a reconciliation, of which one of his visits to Manchester was the immediate occasion, with Madox Brown. "You are aware," he wrote of it to Mr. Rowley, "that there has been a cloud between him and me, and I am more than rejoiced it should be cleared off in such a pleasant way by my old friend himself, for whom I have always had the greatest respect and affection."

A Hammersmith Branch of the Democratic Federation had been formed in June in order to organize work among the labouring population of the district.

The manifesto which it issued was written by Morris. It is a striking instance of the belief which he then undoubtedly held, and from which it took long time and hard teaching to remove him completely, that the re-organization of society which he advocated was immediately practicable, and that it had only to be effected to make all the misery of the world cease. "There is now a constant war," runs this leaflet, "between Capital, or the rich men who make profits out of work without working themselves, and Labour, or the poor men who produce everything and have no more share in what they produce than is necessary to keep them alive. While the rich enslave the poor, they themselves are not happy, and are always trying to ruin each other. Socialism will end this war by abolishing classes: this change will get rid of bad housing, under-feeding, over-work, and ignorance." Such were the sweeping promises then held out by the Federation to a working class whom experience had made deeply incredulous of all promises, or of any great and sudden change in the existing order of the world.

At the great Franchise meeting in Hyde Park on the 21st of July Morris was one of the small knot of Socialists who tried to convert the enthusiasm of the occasion to their own uses, with little obvious success. In the main they were unnoticed and swallowed up in the vast crowd. They had provided themselves with a little cart with a red flag, from which they distributed their manifesto and tried to sell their newspaper. "We found it easy work getting rid of the gratis literature," he wrote next day, "but hard to sell anything." The attempts at speaking from the mound of the reservoir in the Park were little more successful. A contemptuous reference by one of the speakers to John Bright

raised a storm of hooting in the audience; the crowd began to push and sway, and the ring of friends round the banner was broken up and dispersed. There was no actual violence; a suggestion that the unpopular speaker should be put in the Serpentine was not taken up: but the day was over as far as any attempt to influence the crowd was concerned.

By this time the internal jealousies and divergent aims of the Federation were leading up to a crisis that could not be much longer delayed. Its leaders profoundly mistrusted one another, and personalities and accusations of intrigue and duplicity were flying thick. The peacemaker's task was plainly hopeless.

"The time which I have foreseen from the first," Morris writes in August, "seems to be upon us, and I don't see how I can avoid taking my share in the internal conflict which seems likely to rend the D.F. into two or more. More than two or three of us distrust Hyndman thoroughly: I have done my best to trust him, but cannot any longer. Practically it comes to a contest between him and me. If I don't come up to the scratch I shall disappoint those who I believe have their hearts in the cause and are quite disinterested, many of them simple and worthy people. I don't think intrigue or ambition are amongst my many faults; but here I am driven to thrusting myself forward and making a party within a party. However I say I foresaw it, and 'tis part of the day's work, but I begin to wish the day were over."

Into whatever faults of intrigue or ambition Mr. Hyndman may have been led by an undoubtedly jealous and imperious temper, those were not wanting who made it their business to foster distrust and exasperate grievances. When, ten years later, the two men stood once more side by side on the same platform,

Morris generously acquitted his old colleague of all blame for the rupture. But the reconciliation could not reunite a broken party, and the history of English Socialism in the nineteenth century was then already a closed record.

The affair dragged on for several months more. The mere idea of breaking up the party did not distress Morris deeply: "half-a-dozen people," he says, "who agree and are friends, that is, can trust each other, are worth a hundred jealous squabblers." But he was heartily annoyed and, to say the truth, frightened at the prominence into which he found himself being pushed by his faction. He had placed himself at their orders, in the indistinct hope that he might elude responsibility by simply doing loyally what he was told: now to his dismay he found himself called upon to become a leader, and responsible not only for his own action, but for the continued existence of his party.

What brought the quarrel to a point was a jealousy so trivial that it can hardly now move anything beyond a faint smile. A small knot of Socialists in Edinburgh (the same to which two further recruits were added by Morris's visit and address that autumn) had been organized into a society by Mr. Scheu, whose business had taken him there during the summer. To give it a more imposing air, and also to conciliate the national susceptibility, it was not made a branch of the English Democratic Federation, but was started as a separate organization under the name of the Scottish Land and Labour League. The fat was in the fire at once. Mr. Hyndman called for the instant dissolution of the newly-founded league in the name of the Federation One and Indivisible. "Discord has arisen in this Council," ran the reply of his opponents, "owing to

the attempt to substitute arbitrary rule therein for fraternal Co-operation, contrary to the principles of Socialism." The scenes of the Convention of the Year Two were repeated on a microscopic scale. Hyndman was denounced as a tyrant; Scheu was denounced in turn as certainly a foreigner, and probably a traitor in the pay of the police. Accusations were flung back and forward of underhand intrigue, of deliberately wrecking the work of colleagues, of being bribed by capitalist gold. The extreme men on both sides gave the impression that, if it had been possible, they would cheerfully have sent their opponents to the guillotine. Things were finally fought out at a full meeting of the Council of the Federation held in London at Christmas. The details and the result may be given in Morris's own words.

"My merry Christmas"—this is written on Christmas Eve—"is like to be enlivened by a scene or two at all events. Last night came off to the full as damned as I expected, which seldom happens: and the worst of it is that the debate is adjourned till Saturday, as we couldn't sit any later than midnight yesterday. It was a piece of degradation, only illumined by Scheu's really noble and skilful defence of his character against Hyndman: all the rest was a mere exposition of backbiting, mixed with some melancholy and to me touching examples of faith. However, Saturday I *will* be out of it. Our lot agreed beforehand, being I must say moved by me, that it is not worth fighting for the name of the S.D.F. and the sad remains of 'Justice' at the expense of a month or two of wrangling: so as Hyndman considers the S.D.F. his property, let him take it and make what he can of it, and try if he can really make up a bogie of it to frighten the Government, which I really think

is about all his scheme; and we will begin again quite clean-handed to try the more humdrum method of quiet propaganda, and start a new paper of our own. The worst of the new body, as far as I am concerned, is that for the present at least I have to be editor of the paper, which I by no means bargained for, but it seems nobody else will do.

"I went to Chesterfield and saw Carpenter on Monday, and found him very sympathetic and sensible at the same time. I listened with longing heart to his account of his patch of ground, seven acres: he says that he and his fellow can almost live on it: they grow their own wheat, and send flowers and fruit to Chesterfield and Sheffield markets: all that sounds very agreeable to me. It seems to me that the real way to enjoy life is to accept all its necessary ordinary details and turn them into pleasures by taking interest in them: whereas modern civilization huddles them out of the way, has them done in venal and slovenly manner till they become real drudgery which people can't help trying to avoid. Whiles I think, as in a vision, of a decent community as a refuge from our mean squabbles and corrupt society; but I am too old now, even if it were not dastardly to desert."

On the 28th he resumes, writing from Merton Abbey:

"Saturday evening did see the end. We began at 6 and ended at 10.30. I don't think it would interest you to go through the affair in detail, and to say the truth I am so sick of it that I don't think I could write it all down. There was a good deal of speaking, mostly on their side, for Hyndman had brought up supporters, who spouted away without in the least understanding what the quarrel was about. It finished by H. making a long and clever and lawyer-like speech:

all of which, as in the House of Commons, might just as well have been left out, as either side had made up their minds how to vote from the first. Accordingly we voted, and the result was as expected, ten to eight, majority of two on our side. Whereon I got up and after a word or two of defence of my honour, honesty, and all that, which had been somewhat torn ragged in the debate, I read our resignation from the paper prepared thereto, and we solemnly walked out. This seemed to produce what penny-a-liners call 'a revulsion of feeling,' and most of the other side came round me and assured me that they had the best opinion of me and didn't mean all those hard things: poor little Williams cried heartily and took a most affectionate farewell of us. Of course we did right to resign; the alternative would have been a general meeting, and after a month's squabble for the amusement of the rest of the world that cared to notice us, would have landed us first in deadlock and ultimately where we are now, two separate bodies. This morning I hired very humble quarters for the Socialist League, and authorized the purchase of the due amount of Windsor chairs and a kitchen table: so there I am really once more like a young bear with all my troubles before me. We meet to inaugurate the League tomorrow evening. There now, I really don't think I have strength to say anything more about the matter just now. I find my room here and a view of the winter garden, with the men spreading some pieces of chintz on the bleaching ground, somewhat of a consolation. But I promise myself to work as hard as I can in the new body, which I think will be but a small one for some time to come."

CHAPTER XVI

THE SOCIALIST LEAGUE

1885-1886

"I CANNOT yet forgo the hope," Morris had written in July, 1884, when the disruption of the Democratic Federation was already looming ahead, "of our forming a Socialist *party* which shall begin to act in our own time, instead of a mere theoretical association in a private room with no hope but that of gradually permeating cultivated people with our aspirations." After the first spasm of disheartened disgust at the break-up of December was over, he was not disinclined to set to work again to form such a party out of what he believed was a thoroughly loyal remnant. To this task he now set himself in fresh courage and with even higher hope. The conflict had made him examine his own ground more carefully: he was more satisfied than ever of the truth of his principles, and of the reasonableness of his position. But the prominence now forced upon him as a leader at once exposed him to a redoubled storm of misrepresentation and obloquy. Socialism had once been regarded by ordinary middle-class opinion as a thing that went on abroad. When there was no longer any doubt that it had reached England, it was still looked on for a time

as a silly or perhaps even an interesting craze. But now it had roused a genuine fear among a large body of people. The attitude of Gallio was passing away, and a strong feeling arising in its place which regarded the new Gospel, in the words applied by the Rome of Nero to the not wholly dissimilar doctrine of the early Christian Church, as a destructive superstition which drew upon itself the natural hatred of the human race.

But this was not all. In the curious imbroglio into which politics were then drifting, the name, and some at least of the doctrines, of Socialism had been seized by various parties as weapons of attack and defence. The famous speech in which Mr. Chamberlain laid down the doctrine of "ransom" was delivered a few days after the foundation of the Socialist League. On the part of both the Radical and the Tory-Democratic wings of the two great political parties there was a tendency to believe that Socialism in some sense or another was a real force, and a desire to attack that force and use it for all it was worth. Overtures were made from both sides by persons who might fairly be regarded as responsible politicians. Attacked by some and courted by others, the Socialist party became an object of widespread and increasing interest. It was enough to upset many Socialists who were not old hands in politics, and make them believe that a great movement of public opinion was about to take place towards Socialism.

On Morris personally the attack was a double one. It consisted on the one hand in renewing, with additional zest and less attention to ordinary manners, the familiar sneers at the strange figure of a poet-upholsterer; and on the other, of denouncing him for inconsistency or hypocrisy in being a Socialist who

was also a capitalist manufacturer. In his first public utterance after the formation of the Socialist League, he had expressed his hope and his aim in words of studied moderation. He spoke of the social re-organization which he advocated as something not only desirable in itself, but involving a high conception of duty, and containing in it the elements of solid permanence. "When the change comes, it will embrace the whole of society, and there will be no discontented class left to form the elements of a fresh revolution. It is necessary that the movement should not be ignorant, but intelligent. What I should like to have now far more than anything else, would be a body of able, high-minded, competent men who should act as instructors. I should look to those men to preach what Socialism really is—not a change for the sake of change, but a change involving the very noblest ideal of human life and duty: a life in which every human being should find unrestricted scope for his best powers and faculties." The Saturday Review, with characteristic suavity, seized this occasion to point its finger at "this spectacle of the intellectual disaster of the intelligence of a man who could once write 'The Earthly Paradise' and can now formulate these two propositions about the disappearance of all discontented classes and the change involving a life in which every human being finds unrestricted scope for his best powers and faculties." This last phrase, indeed, to judge by the number of times it recurs in the article, was found humorous to an uncommon degree. That such a life should be conceived of as possible, that any attempt should be made to realize it, seemed quite preposterous to the critic and to the large body of opinion which he represented. The laws of nature were invoked to sustain the conclusion that a state

of things in which the larger number of the human race were permanently poor, ignorant, and brutal was certainly necessary and in all probability desirable.

The inconsistency of Morris's own position as a capitalist employer of labour was a matter on which he might more reasonably be challenged by a criticism which was not either purposely unfair or obviously unintelligent. It had formed the ground of the earliest attacks made on him when the Oxford address of November, 1883, had excited general attention to the case. To an attack made by an anonymous correspondent in the Standard, Morris had then replied in simple and dignified words, which come near the truth of the matter, though, as Morris himself felt, they require further definition.

"I think I may assume," he then wrote, "that your correspondent had no wish to cast any personal imputation on my motives, but wished to call attention to the position of those who, like myself, are well-to-do employers of labour (as I am) and hold Socialist views.

"I freely admit that this position is a false one, but it seems to me that its falseness is first felt by an honest man, not when he begins to express his opinions openly, and to further openly the spread of Socialism, but when his conscience is first pricked by a sense of the injustice and stupidity of the present state of society. Your correspondent implies that, to be consistent, we should at once cast aside our position of capitalists, and take rank with the proletariat; but he must excuse my saying that he knows very well that we are not able to do so; that the most we can do is to palliate, as far as we can, the evils of the unjust system which we are forced to sustain; that we are but minute links in the immense chain of the terrible

organization of competitive commerce, and that only the complete unriveting of that chain will really free us. It is this very sense of the helplessness of our individual efforts which arms us against our own class, which compels us to take an active part in an agitation which, if it be successful, will deprive us of our capitalist position."

"I have been living," he writes a few days afterwards from Merton Abbey, "in a sort of storm of newspaper brickbats, to some of which I had to reply: of course I don't mind a bit, nor even think the attack unfair. My own men here are very sympathetic, which pleases me hugely; and I find we shall get on much better for my having spoken my mind about things: seven of them would insist on joining the Democratic Federation, though I preached to them the necessity of really understanding it all."

What is quite certain is that the reproach of inconsistency was never made against Morris by any of his own workmen. The attacks on this score which he had to meet came in the main from educated people, who attached their own meaning to the term Socialism, and were confident in their condemnation of doctrines the purport of which they had never taken pains to ascertain. The fixed idea which most of them had was that Socialism meant the redistribution of individual property in equal shares. From this point, however, they pursued divergent lines of argument. Some contented themselves with remarking that if individual property were divided equally to-day, inequality would have begun to reinstate itself before to-morrow. Others argued that any employer who believed in the principles of Socialism could carry them out in practice by sharing the profits of his business equally among himself and each of his workmen.

But among the latter class of objectors were some for whose good opinion Morris had a respect; and it was implicitly in answer to them that he drew up, in June, 1884, a memorandum going into the matter, not only on the principle, but in detailed figures.

The business was then organized as follows. Morris himself, George Wardle his chief manager, and four other sub-managers or heads of departments, shared directly in the profits of the business. Two others, the colour-mixer and the foreman dyer, shared in them also, but indirectly, in the form of a bonus on the goods turned out. The rest of the staff were paid fixed wages; the greater number (including all the most efficient workmen) by the piece; a smaller residuum, partly consisting of men who were getting past work on the one hand, or on the other as yet imperfectly trained, by the hour. Both piece-workers and time-workers were paid on a scale somewhat over the ordinary market price of their labour. "Two or three people about the place," he adds, "are of no use to the business, and are kept on on the live-and-let-live principle, not a bad one I think as things go, in spite of the Charity Organization Society."

On an analysis of the figures, Morris found that if he gave up his own share of the profits, which, of course, included not merely the remuneration for his own labour as manager, designer, and artificer, but interest on the whole capitalized value of the business, by that time representing some £15,000, and took in lieu of it a foreman's or a highly-skilled workman's wages of £4 a week or £200 a year, there would be a sum divisible which would represent £16 a year, or about six shillings a week, for each of the workmen. "That would, I admit," he adds, "be a very nice thing for them; but it would not alter the position of any one

of them; it would leave them still members of the working class, with all the disadvantages of that position. Further, if I were to die or be otherwise disabled, the business could not get any one to do my work for £200 a year, and would in short at once take back the extra £16 a year from the workman."

"I have left out," he goes on with admirable sincerity, "a matter which complicates the position, my family. We ought to be able to live on £4 a week, and if they were quite well and capable I think they ought not to grumble at living on the said £4, nor do I think they would." There are perhaps few families of the richer middle class to whom so splendid a compliment could be paid.

But what, the memorandum goes on, would be gained by taking such action? A small knot of working people would be somewhat better off amidst the great ocean of economic slavery, but with what probable or necessary result? Like himself, the workmen were imprisoned in an existing social system. "If the manufacturer were to give up his gains to them, they would set to work to save, and would become, or try to become, small capitalists, and then large ones. In effect this is what mostly happens in those few factories where division of profits has been tried. Now, much as I want to see workmen escape from their slavish position, I don't at all want to see a few individuals more creep up out of their class into the middle class; this will only make the poor poorer still. And this effect of multiplying the capitalist class (every member of which is engaged in fierce private commercial war with his fellows) is the utmost that could result from even a large number of employers giving up their profits to their workmen. The men would not know how to spend their newly gained wealth. Even now

there are at times artisans who receive very high wages, but their exceptional good luck has no influence over the general army of wage-earners, and they themselves have in consequence only two choices: the first, to rise out of their class as above; the second, to squander their high earnings and remain in the long run at the ordinary low standard of life of their brethren. The really desirable thing, that, being still workmen, they should rise in culture and refinement, they can only attain by their whole class rising."

But this, as things go, he continues, is impossible; because the competition for subsistence keeps the standard of life, taking labour all round, from rising seriously for any long period. Trades Unions have in England raised it, for a time, for skilled labour. But their effect can in the nature of things be only partial and temporary: for on the one hand the movement, not being an international one, allows other nations to undersell us; and on the other, it does not include the unskilled labourer, whose wage of subsistence finally determines the rate of the wages of labour all round, and who is scarcely in a better position than he was fifty years ago.

The choice, then, which lies before a capitalist, or before the hanger-on of the capitalist class known by the name of a professional man, whom reflection has turned into a convinced Socialist, is this. Shall he ease his conscience by dropping a certain portion of the surplus value which reaches him, in order to bestow it in charity on a handful of workers (for it is but charity after all, since their claim is not on him personally, but on the class and system of which he is a mere unit)? or shall he, continuing his life under existing conditions, do his best, by expenditure of his money and his whole powers, to further a revolution

of the basis of society? If he can do both, let him do so, and make his conscience surer. But if, as must generally be the case, he must choose between suffering some pangs of conscience and divesting himself of his power to further a great principle, "then, I think," Morris concludes, "he is right to choose the first."

It is true that there is a third alternative, that of complete individual renunciation, which, illogical as it may be, has often, as with the earliest Christians, with the mendicant friars of the great religious revival of the thirteenth century, and since then in many splendid isolated instances, affected mankind more powerfully through the imagination than they have ever been affected by arguments or enactments. *If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow me.* Such a course would have accorded with Morris's own early dreams at Oxford of a monastic life, lived by friends in common in the single pursuit of poverty and art. But now it seemed to him to mean practically, though not formally, abandoning the principles for which Socialists contended, and giving up the struggle in a spirit not far removed from cowardice. "If these were ordinary times of peace, I might be contented amidst my discontent to settle down into an ascetic, such a man as I should respect even now. But I don't see the peace or feel it: on the contrary, fate or what not has forced me to feel war, and lays hands on me as a recruit: therefore do I find it not only lawful to my conscience, but even compulsory on it, todo what in times of peace would not perhaps be lawful, and certainly would not be compulsory. If I am wrong I am wrong, and there is an end of it. Whatever hope or life there is in me is staked on the success of the cause. Of

course I don't mean to say that I necessarily expect to see much of it before I die, and yet something I hope to see."

This, then, was the conclusion to which Morris came as to what was right for him to do with his income as a capitalist. To distribute it among his own workmen would be to waste it; he could as little satisfy his conscience by wasting as by hoarding: his duty was to spend it; to devote it, as he devoted all else that belonged to him, to the furtherance of one great purpose.

How it could be so spent was sufficiently plain. The newly-founded Socialist League was practically without funds except so far as he supplied them. That it should spread its doctrines by means of a newspaper was taken for granted from the first, and preparations for bringing out the "Commonweal," the first number of which appeared at the beginning of February, were begun the first moment that the League was constituted. "I intend," he wrote on the 4th of January, "to turn it into a weekly if possible: but paying for 'Justice' has somewhat crippled me, and I shall have to find money for the other expenses of the League first."

The Manifesto of the Socialist League, which was printed at full length in the first number of the Commonweal, declares in uncompromising terms for a complete revolution in the basis of society. Co-operation, Nationalization of Land, State-Socialism which left the existing system of capital and wages still in operation, are reviewed and dismissed as equally useless with merely political movements such as constitutionalism or republicanism. The League is stated to have been founded on the 30th of December, 1884, and to have taken temporary offices at 27, Farringdon Street. Morris is named as having been appointed Treasurer

of the League and Editor of its journal, the control of the journal, however, being in the hands of the Council. The twenty-three persons whose signatures, as members of the Provisional Council, are appended to the manifesto, were mainly members of the little group of Socialists, English and foreign, settled in London: but they included also an old veteran of the Chartist movement, a few members from the great manufacturing centres of Leeds and Glasgow, and among them all, the one friend who had followed Morris unfalteringly through all his life from the Oxford days till now, as member first of the Brotherhood, then of the Firm, and now finally of the League, Charles Faulkner.

The beginnings of the venture were not discouraging. "They have sold 5,000 and are in a second edition," Morris writes on the 10th of February: "I have written a poem for the next number, not bad I think." This poem, "The Message of the March Wind," which appeared in the March number, has touches in it of the natural magic which had filled his early poetry. It opened a series of poems, forming a more or less continuous narrative, which, under the title of "The Pilgrims of Hope," appeared at irregular intervals in the Commonweal for upwards of a year. With all its faults, this series of poems is perhaps the only contribution to the first year's issue of the Commonweal which appeals to a wide circle or has any permanent value as literature. It contains passages of extreme beauty: the two sections reprinted in "Poems by the Way" under the names of "Mother and Son" and "The Half of Life Gone" stand high among his finest work. But the narrative of which they form parts has much of the same weakness and unreality as his prose novel of fifteen years earlier: and like it, dwindles away and finally stops with the unfulfilled promise "To be

Concluded" in July, 1886. Of his prose contributions, signed and unsigned, and ranging from carefully written leading articles down to brief notes hastily set down to fill up a column, there is little to say except that he no more than other men escaped the vices of journalism when he took to being a journalist.

Another visit to Oxford in February was more eventful than the one of fifteen months before, so far at least as the behaviour of the meeting went. The Clarendon Rooms had been refused for this meeting on account of the fear of disturbance, and it was held in the Music Room in Holywell Opinion on both sides had stiffened; and Faulkner had, two or three weeks before, for a speech he had made to a little Socialist meeting in Cowley, been stigmatized in the sedate columns of the Oxford Magazine as an alehouse anarchist. The social enthusiasm which had been so strong in 1883 was beginning to cool down among a fresh generation of undergraduates. But for the healthy young Tory Morris had always a lurking sympathy, and he writes the account of his experiences in the highest spirits.

"Wednesday I went to Oxford with the Avelings: we went by the early train, and all turned out well, and even amusing: we walked about Oxford a good deal, and even with all the horrors done to it, it looks very well and beautiful on such a bright afternoon as we had. There were terrible threats about what the lads were going to do, which I didn't suppose would come to much: we met, some of us, in University Common Room to settle the meeting, and it seems the enemy sent in a spy, which however we survived. Charley had asked a great many very young persons to dinner, and their ingenuous visages made me feel rather old. So to the meeting we went, in a room in

Holywell, which I daresay you have forgotten: it used to be the room of the Architectural Society when I was a boy, and is now a music room: it is just opposite where Janey used to live—Lord, how old I am! Well, we had a fine lot of supporters, town and gown both, who put on red ribbons and acted as stewards, but the 'enemy' got in in some numbers, and prepared for some enjoyment. Charley was in the chair and led off well, and they heard him with only an average amount of howling: you must understand that there were but some 20 or 30 of those enemies, and perhaps 100 declared friends, with some 250 indifferents who really came to listen to us; the hall was quite full. I had to get up when Charley sat down; I was rather nervous before I began, as it was my first long speech without book, but the noise and life braced me up, and after all I knew my subject, so I fired off my speech fairly well I think: if I hadn't, our friends the enemy would have found it out and chaffed me with all the mercilessness of boys. Of course they howled and stamped at certain catch-words, and our people cheered, so that it was very good fun. Aveling came next: they had really listened to me, even the noisy ones; but it seems they had agreed that A. at any rate should not be allowed to speak; but he began very cleverly and won their ingenuous hearts so that they listened to him better than they did to me. Then came question-time, and that was more than they could bear; after two or three questions asked and answered, the joke of the evening came off by one young gentleman letting off a bottle of chemical which made a horrible stink, and the respectables began to leave and both the fighting [bodies] to draw nearer to the platform. Then by Aveling's advice Charley, who was by the

way getting a bit nervous, broke off the meeting, and we 'got'; which I suppose was the best thing to do, as more horseplay might have made what was serious enough ridiculous. After all the best joke was what we heard next day, viz., that the disturbers were so angry with their ringleader for not making a better job of it that they broke all his windows that same night. I hope this piece of frankness touches your hard heart as it did mine. We had some serious talk at our inn after the meeting with the best of the lads; and then some of them took us into New College cloisters to see their loveliness under the moon."

From Mr. Edward Carpenter's house at Millthorpe he writes on the 28th of April, on his way home from giving Socialist addresses in Edinburgh and Glasgow:

"I have been getting on pretty well in Scotland, but whether pock-pudding prejudice or not, I can't bring myself to love that country, 'tis so raw-boned. But I had my reward by the journey (the first time in daylight) from Carlisle to Settle: 'tis true that the day was most splendid, but at any rate 'tis the pick of all England for beauty. I fared to feel as if I must live there, say somewhere near Kirkby Stephen, for a year or two before I die: even the building there is not bad; necessitous and rude, but looking like shelter and quiet. There is a good deal of this lovely country; the railway goes right up into the mountains among the sheepwalks: there was a little snow lying in bights of the highest crags. I needn't enlarge on an entry into the Yorkshire manufacturing country after this; but I was so elated by the beauty we had passed through that I did not feel it as much as usual. I read a queer book called 'After London'

coming down: I rather liked it: absurd hopes curled round my heart as I read it. I rather wish I were thirty years younger: I want to see the game played out."

"After London," the unfinished masterpiece of Richard Jefferies, was a book that Morris afterwards was never weary of praising. It put into definite shape, with a mingling of elusive romance and minute detail that was entirely after his heart, much that he had himself imagined; and he thought that it represented very closely what might really happen in a dispeopled England. The effect of the book is perhaps visible in another letter of the 13th of May:

"I am in low spirits about the prospects of our 'party,' if I can dignify a little knot of men by such a word. Scheu is, I fear, leaving London again, which is a great disappointment to me, but he must get work where he can. You see we are such a few, and hard as we work we don't seem to pick up people to take our places when we demit. All this you understand is only said about the petty skirmish of outposts, the fight of a corporal's guard, in which I am immediately concerned; I have more faith than a grain of mustard seed in the future history of 'civilization,' which I *know* now is doomed to destruction, and probably before very long: what a joy it is to think of! and how often it consoles me to think of barbarism once more flooding the world, and real feelings and passions, however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocrisies. With this thought in my mind all the history of the past is lighted up and lives again to me. I used really to despair once because I thought what the idiots of our day call progress would go on perfecting itself: happily I know now that all that will have a sudden

check—sudden in appearance I mean—'as it was in the days of Noë.' "

On the 27th of May he writes again, giving in a few touches a vivid picture of what the little meetings, over which he was spending so much time and energy, were really like.

"On Sunday I went a-preaching Stepney way. My visit intensely depressed me, as these Eastward visits always do: the mere stretch of houses, the vast mass of utter shabbiness and uneventfulness, sits upon one like a nightmare: of course what slums there are one doesn't see. You would perhaps have smiled at my congregation; some twenty people in a little room, as dirty as convenient and stinking a good deal. It took the fire out of my fine periods, I can tell you: it is a great drawback that I can't *talk* to them roughly and unaffectedly. Also I would like to know what amount of real feeling underlies their bombastic revolutionary talk when they get to that. I don't seem to have got at them yet—you see this great class gulf lies between us."

The numbers of the League grew only very slowly. In July, when stock was taken of the progress made, they only amounted to a little over two hundred all told, over all the branches in both England and Scotland. But they were working on hard in the hope of an ampler harvest from some sudden movement of popular feeling. In June they had taken new premises in Farringdon Road, which included a printing office and a large lecture room. The output of leaflets and pamphlets, as well as their monthly journal, was carried on to the utmost limit of their means; and it had been determined to turn the Commonweal into a weekly paper as soon as sufficient guarantee could be procured against the further loss of money on it that

was then certainly to be expected. Morris himself, beyond his other work for the League, had set on foot a branch at Hammersmith, to whose use he gave up the large room where he had begun his carpet-weaving. Sunday evening addresses were regularly given there by himself or others of his colleagues; and as regularly on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings he spoke at outdoor meetings in different parts of London. At these, as a rule, knots of working men and casual passers-by listened with a languid interest. But in September the action taken by the heads of the Metropolitan Police with regard to an open air meeting in Limehouse raised the Socialistic movement into increased notoriety, and gave it the greatest access of popular support that it had yet found.

A space in that part of London, at the corner of Dod Street and Burdett Road, had long been in common use for public gatherings and open-air speaking on all kinds of subjects, especially on Sundays, when there was practically no traffic. The Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League had both held meetings there repeatedly. Of late there had been some friction with the police, and notice had been given that the meetings must be stopped. The joyful expectation of a disturbance drew a crowd estimated at about a thousand people to the place that Sunday. Against this crowd, which was quite determined not to be dispersed so long as there was the chance of seeing any fun, the dozen or so of police who had been drafted to the spot found themselves almost helpless. Several ineffective attempts had been made to get at the group of speakers who were on a drag in the middle of the concourse, and the police, jeered at and hustled by an unsympathetic crowd, began to lose their tempers. Meanwhile one

o'clock struck; and the signal of the opening of the public houses caused the greater part of the crowd to disperse. Hot, weary, and angry, and not wishing to think that all their unpleasant morning's work had effected nothing, the policemen charged among the remnant, knocked down two banners, and marched eight men off to the nearest police station, where they were charged with obstructing a public thoroughfare and resisting the police in the execution of their duty.

When the prisoners were brought up at the Thames Police Court next morning, there was the usual amount of confused and contradictory evidence given as to the amount of obstruction that had really happened, and the degree of violence used by or against the police. Finally, after some rather irrelevant remarks about the nationality of the prisoners and the contents of the bills announcing the meeting, Mr. Saunders, the sitting magistrate, sentenced one of them to two months' hard labour and imposed fines all round on the rest. What is known as a scene in court followed; there were loud hisses and cries of "Shame!" In these Morris, who was in court with other members of the League, joined: there was some hustling before order was restored, and he was arrested and charged on the spot with disorderly conduct and striking a policeman. To this charge he gave a direct negative. No evidence was called on either side, but the following curious dialogue ensued.

Mr. Saunders: What are you?

Prisoner: I am an artist and a literary man, pretty well known, I think, throughout Europe.

Mr. Saunders: I suppose you did not intend to do this?

Prisoner: I never struck him at all.

Mr. Saunders: Well, I will let you go.

Prisoner: But I have not done anything.

Mr. Saunders: Well, you can stay if you like.

Prisoner: I don't want to stay.

He was accordingly discharged, and left the court. It was the one instance in which he was stung into asserting his own reputation in public, and the incautious words were long remembered against him. But the whole proceedings were a substantial victory for him and his party. The right of free speech is of all the privileges of citizenship the one which the ordinary Englishman guards most jealously: and interference with that right, when it seems to encroach on customary limits, is fiercely resented by the most orderly classes. More especially is this so in London, where the police are under the direct control of the Imperial Executive, and where any suspicion that they have been used by the party in power to suppress hostile criticism is enough to shake the strongest Government. The London Radicals rallied to the defence of a threatened privilege, and letters of protest poured into the newspapers from opponents as well as friends of Socialism. Many people who took no interest in politics at all were indignant: "already," one of them wrote to the Daily News, "police interference has caused more obstruction and disturbance than twelve months of Socialistic lecturing." A weak Conservative Government was then in office: a General Election was imminent: and angry charges were made that this attack on a Socialist meeting was an insidious attempt to prepare the way for interference with open-air Parliamentary meetings. The Socialist League rose with a bound to something like popularity. The following Sunday a procession of many thousands of people, organized by the East London United

Radical Club, held a meeting on the forbidden spot (the few policemen present, under fresh instructions, not attempting to interfere), and then dispersed in a quiet orderly way, good-tempered with victory. "All goes well," Morris wrote: "we Socialists have suddenly become popular, and your humble servant could hardly have received more sympathy if he had been racked by Mr. Saunders. All this has its absurd, and even humiliating side, but it is encouraging to see that people are shocked at unfairness and persecution of mere opinion, as I really think they are."

Unfortunately for the prospects of the League, the ground thus gained was soon lost by the old trouble of ill-assorted colleagues and internal jealousies. Morris himself, who had been working and travelling much beyond his strength, was laid up immediately afterwards for a month or six weeks with the severest attack of gout he had yet had, and in his absence the others fell to quarrelling with one another. On the 31st of October, while still completely crippled by his illness, he wrote to Mrs. Burne-Jones:

"Here I am still more or less on my back, though I am getting better; I have not had any very bad pain, but have been so dead lame that till yesterday it has been a month of wheeling me in on a sofa from my room to the dining-room. I think I was much like this at Venice, only not so lame. There, enough of symptoms. It has been beautiful weather here till to-day, and I am glad of that for your holidays' sake: also I have enjoyed it myself: it was quite a luxury to lie here in the morning and let the sun creep over me and watch the clouds. I am afraid that when I get about again I shall find myself very lazy; I have picked up terrible habits of novel-reading and doing nothing this spell. I don't think it comes from my

knocking about to meetings and the like, but rather from incaution as to diet, which I really must look after. You see, having joined a movement, I must do what I can while I last, that is a matter of duty. Besides, in spite of all the self-denying ordinances of us semi-anarchists, I grieve to have to say that some sort of leadership is required, and that in our section I unfortunately supply that want; it seems I was missed last Monday, and stupid quarrels about nothing took place, which it was thought I could have stopped. All this work I have pulled upon my own head, and though in detail much of it is repulsive to the last degree, I still hold that I did not do so without due consideration. Anyhow, it seems to me that I can be of use, therefore I am impelled to make myself useful.

"It is true, as I think I have said before, that I have no great confidence in the stability of our party: but in the stability of the movement I have every confidence; and this I have always said to myself, that on the morrow of the League breaking up I and some half-dozen must directly begin a new organization; and I believe we should do so.

"You see, my dear, I can't help it. The ideas which have taken hold of me will not let me rest: nor can I see anything else worth thinking of. How can it be otherwise, when to me society, which to many seems an orderly arrangement for allowing decent people to get through their lives creditably and with some pleasure, seems mere cannibalism; nay worse, (for there might be hope in that,) is grown so corrupt, so steeped in hypocrisy and lies, that one turns from one stratum of it to another with hopeless loathing. One must turn to hope, and only in one direction do I see it—on the road to Revolution:

everything else is gone now. And now at last when the corruption of society seems complete, there is arising a definite conception of the new order, with its demands in some sort formulated. In the details of that I do not myself feel any great confidence, but that they have taken so much form is hopeful, because unless the new is near to the birth, however rotten the old may be, rebellion against it is mere hopeless grumbling and railing, such as you used to reproach me with.

"Meantime what a little ruffles me is this, that if I do a little fail in my duty some of my friends will praise me for failing instead of blaming me. I have a pile of worry about the party ahead of me when I am about again, which must excuse me for dwelling on these things so much."

"They made it up last night," he writes a few days later of the particular quarrel which was then agitating the party. "Even such things as this—the army setting off to conquer all the world turning back to burn Jack's pigstye, and tumbling drunk into the fire —even this don't shake me: means one must use the best one can get; but one thing I won't do, wait for ever till perfect means are made for very imperfect me to work with. As to my not looking round, why it seems to me that no hour of the day passes that the whole world does not show itself to me."

Such was the courage with which Morris met apparent failure. He was soon to be more seriously alarmed by a sudden though elusive prospect of premature success. It was being borne in on him by bitter daily experience how unripe the Socialist party was; how discordant in its aims, how unfixed in its principles, how incapable of forming or guiding any large popular movement. On the 8th of February,

1886, a meeting of the London unemployed in Trafalgar Square had been followed by a riot which caused an immense sensation, and to the imaginations of many persons seemed the beginning of a really revolutionary movement. When the meeting was over, a mob made its way through several of the main streets of the West End of London, hurling stones at the windows of the club-houses, stopping carriages and demanding money from the occupants, and breaking into and plundering several shops, less it would seem from any distinct plan of robbery than as a rough practical joke. Morris's own shop, or at the least its windows, only escaped destruction by a few minutes; the shutters were put up and the door locked just as the crowd began to pour into Oxford Street out of North Audley Street. But by that time they had become a mere rabble, and were easily dispersed by the police. "Contemptible as the riot was, as a riot," Morris wrote of it, "it no doubt has had a great effect, both here and on the Continent." Nothing of the sort had happened in London for many years. Parliament had just met and a change of Ministry was in progress. The rumours of Mr. Gladstone's proposed Irish legislation had raised politics to a high tension, and there was all abroad a general uneasiness and excitement which needed little to inflame it. To the Socialists, at least to the more thoughtful among them, excitement was mingled with a sort of terror. They had been working for a revolution, hitherto with little belief that anything could be effected for a long time to come. Was the revolution, beyond their expectation and almost beyond their hope, already at the door? In the next number of the Commonweal, Morris took the opportunity to issue a weighty statement of policy.

The article opens in a tone that gives little promise of applying either light or wisdom to the situation. It was the time when the vices of that debased journalism with which he had deliberately associated himself infected Morris most deeply. The description of the riot itself, and the forecast of what might ensue from it, are not free from qualities most deeply alien from his own nature, tumid metaphor and tawdry declamation. So far the writing is characteristic not of himself, but of his party, or of any party of undisciplined and half-educated men, whether reactionaries or revolutionaries. But once he has paid this sacrifice to the taste of his colleagues, he speaks in his own voice with grave good-sense and temperate foresight.

"I should like to say a few words with the utmost seriousness to our comrades and supporters, on the policy of the Socialist League. I have said that we have been overtaken unprepared, by a revolutionary incident, but that incident was practically aimless. This kind of thing is what many of us have dreaded from the first, and we may be sure that it will happen again and again while the industrial outlook is what it is; but every time it happens it will happen with every-increasing tragedy. It is above all things our business to guard against the possible consequences of these surprises. At the risk of being misunderstood by hot-heads, I say that our business is more than ever *Education*.

"The Gospel of Discontent is in a fair way towards forcing itself on the whole of the workers; how can that discontent be used so as to bring about the New Birth of Society? That is the question we must always have before us. It is too much to hope that the *whole* working class can be educated in the aims of Socialism in due time, before other surprises take

place. But we must hope that a strong party can be so educated, educated in economics, in organization, and in administration. To such a body of men all the aspirations and vague opinion of the oppressed multitudes would drift, and little by little they would be educated by them, if the march of events should give us time; or if not, even half-educated they would follow them in any action which it was necessary to take.

"Let me ask our comrades to picture to themselves the consequences of an aimless revolt unexpectedly successful for the time; we will even suppose that it carries with it a small number of men capable of government and administration, though that is supposing a great deal. What would be the result unless the people had some definite aim, however limited?

"The men thus floated to the surface would be powerless, their attempts at legislation would be misunderstood, disappointment and fresh discontent would follow, and the counter-revolution would sweep them away at once. But, indeed, it would not even come to that. History teaches us that no revolts that are without aim are successful even for a time; even the failures (some of them glorious indeed) had a guiding aim in them, which only lacked completeness.

"The educational process, therefore, the forming a rallying point for definite aims, is necessary to our success; but I must guard against misunderstanding. We must be no mere debating club, or philosophical society; we must take part in all really popular movements when we can make our own views on them unmistakably clear; that is a most important part of the education in organization.

"Education towards Revolution seems to me to express in three words what our policy should be;

towards that New Birth of Society which we know must come, and which, therefore, we must strive to help forward so that it may come with as little confusion and suffering as may be."

In issuing this manifesto Morris, while not taking any step that brought him nearer the other wing of the Socialist party, the Parliamentarians and opportunists with whom he had broken a year before, also cut himself definitely away from the more violent section of his own supporters, who were already beginning to class themselves as Anarchists. It became a question whether the midway course he had chosen would attract towards it the best men of both extremes, or whether, on the other hand, he and his following would find themselves a mere thinning remnant between two divergent and increasing camps.

To Burne-Jones, who had written to him after the riot of the 8th of February asking him not to do anything rash, he answered:

"Many thanks, my dear Ned, for your anxiety, but lay it aside for the present. I shall not shove myself into assemblies that are likely to turn into riots; and for the rest I don't think that the Government will be such doited fools as to attack mere *opinion*. If they do, all liberal-minded persons will be on our side and they will be ignominiously beaten. At the worst as far as I am concerned it cannot come to much more than a mere joke of a Police-Court case; and that not till the summer. I think the present excitement (it is little more) will die out; or rather be flattened out into a sort of dull discontent favourable to our propaganda, but not likely to lead people into mere aimless rioting. So I am not a bit anxious about myself. My mind is quite made up as to my position; I daresay you would not agree with me as to my views on

that matter, but you would have to admit that I was right, judging the thing from my starting point, namely that I am impelled to take action of some sort.

"I will talk of this matter when we meet: meantime, old chap, I send my best love to you for troubling about me.

"I wish I were not so damned old. If I were but twenty years younger! But then you know there would be the Female complication somewhere. Best as it is after all."

"I have often thought," he says in another letter of the same date, "that we should be overtaken by the course of events—overtaken unprepared I mean. It will happen again and again: and some of us will cut sorry figures in the confusion. I myself shall be glad when this ferment sinks down again. Things industrial are bad—I wish they would better: their doing so would not interfere with our propaganda, and would give us some chance of getting at working men with intelligence and some share of leisure. Yet if that will not come about, and the dominating classes *will* push revolution on us, let it be! the upshot must be good in the end. If you had only suffered as I have from the apathy of the English lower classes (woe's me how low!) you would rejoice at their awakening, however ugly the forms it took. As to my capacity for leadership in this turmoil, believe me, I feel as humble as could be wished: yet after all it is my life, and the work of it, and I must do my best."

The ferment sank down; and though his forecast of trouble with the police in summer was to be literally verified, he had soon resumed the regular routine of his work. "We had a very crowded meeting here on Sunday," he writes to Mrs. Morris on the 3rd of April:

"I am going to Croydon to-morrow. Murray is in town, come back to Graham's sale: I saw him at Charing Cross the other day. I go to Dublin on Thursday evening. I see people are making a great fuss about Walker's pictures: I don't *much* sympathize, but the one that they have bought for the National Gallery is the best he did. Ned's and Gabriel's are to be sold to-day. Millais's Vale of Rest fetched a long price: but at any rate 'tis worth a cartload of the wretched daubs he turns out now."

"I came back from the Irishry all safe last night," he resumes on the 15th; "but I am off to Leeds and Bradford on Saturday and shall not be back thence till Tuesday: after that, peace as far as travelling is concerned till the end of June. I had a good passage back, and did 50 lines of Homer on the boat. Dublin on the whole I rather like: there is a sort of cosy shabbiness about it which, joined to the clear air, is pleasant. The last meeting on the Tuesday evening was peaceful and even enthusiastic. The day I had spent up among the Wicklow mountains, and found it very beautiful. On whatever other points the Irishry are wild, they are quite cool, sensible, and determined on the Home Rule question. I met some very agreeable middle-classers there and had much talk—far too much in fact; I doubt if there is an iron pot in Dublin with a leg on it by this time.

"I was very glad to get home and am very loth to leave it I can tell you. However, the wine is drawn and must be drunk."

The translation of the Odyssey to which this last letter alludes had been just begun; and its inception marks the point at which the extreme tension of the last three years began to relax. For as long a period to come he continued equally active and conscientious

in the work of spreading Socialist doctrine, but creative work in art and letters began now to resume its normal place in his mind. The effect on his spirits and temper was soon obvious. In May, when the fortunes of the first Home Rule Bill were still swaying heavily in the balance, he could take note of the wild words that were flying in the air with a humorous side glance at the hardly wilder words of the extremists among his own colleagues. "Rebellion is getting quite fashionable now; I shall have to join the Quakers. I wonder if the Queen will order herself to be arrested after having hoisted the flag of rebellion on Buckingham Palace. I don't think, mind you, that there is *much* else than brag about the Orangemen; I suppose it would end in a riot or two. But you really should read the St. James's now and then; Hyndman at his wildest is nothing to it."

Indeed he seems now and then to have found it necessary to brace himself up against a moderation that was stealing over him almost against his will. "I do not love contention; I even shrink from it with indifferent persons. Indeed I know that all my faults lie on the other side: love of ease, dreaminess, sloth, sloppy good-nature, are what I chiefly accuse myself of. All these would not have been hurt by my being a 'moderate Socialist'; nor need I have forgone a good share of the satisfaction of vainglory: for in such a party I could easily have been a leader, nay, perhaps *the* leader, whereas amidst our rough work I can scarcely be a leader at all and certainly do not care to be. I say this because I feel that a very little self-deception would have landed me among the moderates. But self-deception it would have been."

That recovered sweetness of temper (which no one but himself would ever have thought of describing as

sloppy good-nature, or good-nature of any kind but the simplest and soundest) is apparent in a series of his letters to his daughter during June.

June 2. "Such a knockabout day as I had on Monday! I saw in the Daily News that our men had been 'run in' at Stratford, and expected what followed; namely that as soon as I got home I had to go off to West Ham Police Court (which is the Lord knows where) and see about cash for paying their fines: for we foolishly let too many men be run in, so that though the fines were small, it came to £5 17*s.* in all. I am very busy lecturing all this week, and have plenty of regrets for the rest of Kelmscott and your dear company; but what will you? it is part of the day's work."

June 5. "Stories I have none to tell you: 'tis all meeting and lecture, lecture and meeting, with a little writing interspersed. It was Margaret's birthday on Thursday when I went to the Grange I found. She is ever so old, 20 actually, just think, and she the baby of the lot! Both the Hammersmith and the Merton gardens are looking very nice now, though even the latter is commonplace compared with Kelmscott. A lady who came on Thursday sent us yesterday a lot of peonies, single ones of various kinds, very handsome: they are Chinese flowers and look just like the flowers on their embroideries.

"Your old Prooshian Blue (only 'tis indigo)."

June 15. "There is a good deal to tell you about since I wrote last. Though I forget if I told you how I went to speak on the disputed place at Stratford on Saturday week. Well, I went there rather expecting the police to 'run me in.' In which case I should have been fined the following Monday after a wearisome morning. However the meeting was so orderly that

they didn't venture, perhaps all the more as two of the Radicals spoke also; the meeting also was somewhat short. Last Saturday however they did 'run in' Mowbray and fined him 20*s.* and costs yesterday, which seemed to me absurd; I mean to say that they let us alone and got him. We are not going to give it up however yet, but shall try to get the Radicals to go into it heartily, as really an ordinary meeting makes no obstruction at all. In any case I shall not go there on Saturday, because on the Monday after I am to go on the Scotch journey of which I told you, and shall be away for a week. As to my coming to see you, my darling, if I possibly can this week I will; though it will have to be but a short visit.

"As to other events, we had our Conference on Sunday; all day long it lasted; May and I getting home about 11.30 p.m. It was rather a weary job that Conference, and as I was not a delegate, I had not got to speak; though that was after all rather a blessing, as the main subject in dispute was the alteration of the Constitution—not of the British Empire, but of the League. However all went well; the alterers were defeated and bore their defeat with good temper; but I am very glad that there is a respite of a year before we can have another. Yesterday (Monday) we had our outing and I rather enjoyed it, though we did not distinguish ourselves by much organization in it, wandering about rather aimlessly: also the day was not brilliant, as in the afternoon there was a sort of cloudy drizzle on the hills: yet we escaped a good ducking. The place, Box Hill, is really beautiful, with a famous box-wood at the top: you and I must go there when you are back in London. We finished off in Dorking, not however at the Markis of Granby, but the Wheatsheaf, where we had tea, beer, singing and

recitation. I regret to state that in the town generally we were taken for a detachment of the Salvation Army. In fact Dorking is a very quiet place, and I don't suppose they have yet heard the word Socialist. I forgot to say by the way, that though I didn't speak at Stratford on Saturday I did so at Hyde Park near the Marble Arch. I was quite nervous about it, I don't know why: because when I was speaking at Stratford I was not nervous at all, though I expected the Police to attack us. At Hyde Park we had a very quiet and rather good audience, and sold four quires of Commonweal: and I spoke twice, the second time not at all nervously.

"As to the Bill, my dear, we expected it to be defeated, though not by so large a majority. The question now is what the country will say about it. Again I expect Gladstone will be beaten, though this time he ought not to be, as he is in the right. I thought his last manifesto (of yesterday) was good and straightforward: there will be all sorts of trouble if the Home Rule matter is not soon settled. I am rather enjoying myself to-day after the last two days' excitement, in being quietly at home on a nice fine fresh day, though I am obliged to work very hard."

June 23: Arbroath. "I am here all safe and well: not a bad sort of a town for Scotland: all stone built, and all the older houses roofed with stone slates, right on the sea: it is in fact Fairport of 'The Antiquary.' The remains of a very fine Abbey Church and buildings stand for St. Ruth, the Musselcraig is identified, and so forth. I slept a good deal on the road: woke as the train went out of Stirling and showed a very raw-boned town but a lovely country: plain and mountains with Forth amidst it very lovely. Perth also blue-boned, but a most beautiful situation, especi-

ally down the water of Tay. I have been walking on the sea-shore *not* trying to remember Miss Isabella Wardour; and now want my dinner."

Even the long-looked-for collision with the police over the matter of open-air meetings, when it came, came in the mildest and most good-humoured form. On Sunday morning the 18th of July, in accordance with advertised arrangement, Morris was addressing an outdoor meeting in a street off the Edgware Road. An Inspector of police appeared on the scene; the crowd groaned, but made way for him. He came up "mighty civil" and told Morris to stop speaking: Morris refused; his name and address were taken, and the Inspector went away again. Morris was summoned two days afterwards at the Marylebone Police Court; the technical offence of obstructing the highway was, of course, indisputable, and he was fined a shilling and costs. This was his last encounter with authority in the cause of freedom of speech. Public interest in the matter had for the time died away. Since their experience in Limehouse the year before, the police had been acting more sensibly, and avoided purposeless friction. The public were getting a little tired of the meetings on waste grounds or at street corners, which they vaguely classed with those of the Salvation Army as probably well-meant but certainly foolish, and best treated with neglect. The Radical clubs, which had rallied to the cry of free speech the year before, now hung back, and very reasonably suggested that if there were to be any common action, the Socialists had better first make up their own differences, which had for long been no secret. Always eager for peace, Morris took on himself once more the task of approaching the Social Democratic Federation to try to patch up the quarrel.

The attempt at peacemaking proved quite futile. Morris found the leader of the other faction "stiff and stately, playing the big man, and complaining of being ill-treated by us, which was a Wolf and Lamb business." Indeed most of the grievances, on whichever side the cause of offence first arose, seem now as they seemed to Morris then, "preposterously petty." At Dod Street—so the leaders of the Social Democratic Federation insisted, and made this the front of the offence—there had been a distinct breach of faith as regards the order of speeches on the 27th of September the year before. Angry words had passed at the time about this, and the Council of the Socialist League had passed a resolution expressing its "pity for Mr. Hyndman's tools." The insult was never forgotten. Since then each party had roundly accused the other of trying to break up its local branches by open abuse and underground insinuations. "How *can* we make common cause," they asked, "with people who are perpetually calling us all liars, rogues, intriguers?" For Morris personally indeed his opponents expressed unaltered regard. To accuse him of intrigue would have been plainly preposterous in the most heated adversary: and little as they took a lesson by it, the simple goodness of his nature impressed itself on even the most jealous, the vainest, the most vindictive of the men whom he longed to call his comrades, and for whose faults and vices, so long as he believed they had the root of the matter somewhere in them, he had a patience that was all but inexhaustible.

"Well, I think I have done with that lot," he writes when this last negotiation had broken down. "Why will people quarrel when they have a serious end in view? I went to Merton yesterday and worked

very hard at my patterns and found it amusing. I have finished the 8th book of Homer and got into the 9th, Lotus Eaters, Cyclops, and so on. How jolly it would be to be in a little cottage in the deep country going on with that, and long walks interspersed—in the autumn country, which after all I love as much as the spring."

CHAPTER XVII

THE ODYSSEY: JOHN BALL: TRAFALGAR SQUARE

1886-1887

THE return to literature, which began early in 1886 with the translation of the Odyssey into English verse, was to some degree both the cause and the effect of a gradual change in Morris's attitude towards active Socialism. For between three and four years he had forced himself, under the impulse of a great hope and the continuous sense of a primary duty, into a more contracted and perhaps a less effective life than was consonant with his real nature. His principles had changed little when he became a declared Socialist: they changed even less now: but the movement of things was lifting him slowly away from the path that had coincided with or deflected his own, and insensibly he began to swing back into his own orbit. He held as strongly as ever that Education towards Revolution was the end to be steadily pursued. But the terms Education and Revolution both began to shift and enlarge their meaning. As the strain of an excessive concentration on a single task relaxed, the joy of work returned in a fuller measure. "It is right and necessary"—such was the claim he had made consistently from the first on behalf of human life—

"that all men should have work of itself pleasant to do; nay more, work done without pleasure is, however one may turn it, not real work at all, but useless and degrading toil." The educational, no less than the creative, work which he did in the latter years of life resumed this pleasurable quality, which for a time, under the compulsion of what seemed an overpowering duty, had been almost beaten out of it. In the strenuous self-devotion to the labours exacted of him by his party—sometimes distasteful to him in the highest degree, sometimes of a kind for which he had little native aptitude—there had been an element of what he himself felt to be unnatural. His energy had become forced and feverish. In his own beautiful words, it was the "power of the strong man yearning to accomplish something before his death, not the simple hope of the child who has long years of life and growth before him." That simple hope is a thing which, once broken, can never be wholly restored. But in his work for the cause henceforth there was, in spite of all discouragements, the hope and the joy that come of work which looks to no immediate results, and is checked by no apparent failure, but sows the seed and leaves it to quicken: as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.

The translation of the Odyssey had been begun in February, but made little progress till summer, when he took to it with keen interest and advanced with it rapidly. "The Odyssey is to my mind much the most interesting of the two," he had written to Ellis when he first took up the translation, "but I may do the Iliad afterwards. It is hard work, much more so than the Virgil, owing to the great simplicity of the original,

which never has a redundant word in it, or a word without a meaning: however it is very pleasant work." As it went on, its soothing effect over his nerves became more and more marked. At the beginning of September he alludes to its progress in a letter promising a visit to W. Bell Scott in his northern home at Penkill:

"I am of course much more from pillar to post since I have taken to the pernicious practice of what may be called professional agitation, professional though unpaid, except by general loss of reputation, which however is of no importance, and by no means balances on the wrong side the pleasure on the right side of being engaged in an important movement. Things seem to us more and more tending to a great change, though no doubt it will take time, and also there is a great expenditure of patience necessary to meet all the petty worries that encumber the progress of even great movements. I am also at work, as perhaps you have heard, at translating the Odyssey: this is very amusing: and a great rest from the other work: I am in the middle of the 9th book now."

On the 7th of September he writes to Kelmscott:

"Dearest Jenny,

"I am just writing a line to say that I am well and busy, though somewhat sulky at being dragged away from Kelmscott. The garden here is going the way of all London autumn gardens; but there is still a sort of pale prettiness about it, and there are a good many flowers in it, chiefly Japanese anemones and 'Chaynee oysters.' The gardener is busy to-day tidying up. Yesterday M. Guerrault called wanting work; Mr. York Powell (who is working with Gúdbrandr Vigfússon at Oxford) was with him: the conversation

I regret to say was chiefly between Powell and me, as Guerrault talks little English and I—well. Powell is a very nice fellow, a good deal of a Socialist and very genial: he was born and bred in Walthamstow, though a Welsh one of blood: he used as a boy to come to Leyton House, he told me. I go to Merton Abbey to-day, and in the evening to a Fabian meeting, where it seems our people expect me to speak against the party of compromise. Young Tom Wardle was summoned for speaking at the Harrow Road Station, some weeks ago, and appeared at the police-court yesterday: he was committed for trial: he says he will not pay a fine—item his father says *he* won't. The Temperance people sent a deputation to us on the beautiful Monday that we others went to the White Horse on; they are quite prepared to work with us, and in fact we have made an alliance offensive and defensive with them: I think we shall beat the police in the long run after all. Even at the place where T. Wardle was summoned they have not interfered with us for three weeks.

"Dear me! my Jenny, what a nice four days I did have down there with you; I doubt if I ever enjoyed myself so much in my life: it was delightful and dear.

"I have a long letter from Mr. Birchall this morning about semi-Socialism: he is really a very sensible man: and Mr. Turner says he has very good knowledge of archæology. Well, my dear, I must now go to Merton. Best love, dear: also to all the party.

"Your loving father,

"W. M."

Later in the month he went to Edinburgh to give an address. On the journey, "I amused myself partly with Homer (110 lines) and partly with reading a new

book which is very interesting, Russian Epic Songs to wit. The smoke hung low on Edinburgh, so that the mountains looked like strong outlines against the sky, and the ugly detail of the houses was a good deal hidden : so that there was something very fine about the whole view from the Castle Hill, to which I wandered before getting into the church where our window is. Our window is fine, and looks a queer contrast with its glittering jewel-like colour to the daubs about it. There is no station hotel at Edinburgh, so I had to make a shot at one, and it was a bad one too ; dull and not over clean. It was quite respectable however, although its dulness was relieved by a sudden fight between the head waiter and a quarrelsome gentleman more or less in liquor. The waiter got the best of it and quite deserved to do so, as far as I could see. It was a curious piece of drama to note the attempts of the quarrelsome gentleman to get away with some kind of dignity, while his old antagonist, become the polite waiter again, brushed past him taking other people's orders."

Already literature both in prose and verse was filling up his mind. At the end of October he was full of new projects : "it really would be rather convenient to me to have a little gout in order to do some literary work." One of these projects, never carried out, was to rewrite and complete the fragments of the poem which had appeared in the Commonweal under the title of "The Pilgrims of Hope." The first half of the Odyssey was nearly completed. And he had begun to write the flower of his prose romances, the work into which he put his most exquisite descriptions and his deepest thoughts on human life, "The Dream of John Ball." It also was first published in the Commonweal, beginning in the number for the 13th

of November, 1886, and concluding in that for the 22nd of January, 1887.

Even in his direct work for the party—for he still took his full share of duty as a Socialist speaker and on the executive of the League—the reviving literary instinct was beginning to show itself unmistakably. No sooner was "John Ball" completed than he began to write an elaborate diary of his work and of the movement of things generally in the world about him, with the view of compiling an exact contemporary chronicle. Like the Iceland diary of 1871, it was written with some more or less defined view of publication; "I am writing a diary," he says in a letter to his daughter, "which may one day be published as a kind of view of the Socialist movement seen from the inside, Jonah's view of the whale, you know, my dear." But it was carried on for only three months: and three months' experience may have sufficed to convince him that this sort of literature—if literature it was strictly to be called—was not on his own strongest side and was hampering him in more important work. The fragment has a double interest, both from passages which seem to show that he still treasured the hope of some sudden and surprising revolution in civilized life, and from other passages in which he criticises his party from the outside with a curiously dispassionate clearness. In both alike, and indeed all through, it has the unique transparency of a record of his actual thoughts at each moment, without any attempt at consistency, or at altering his forecasts in the light of actual events. The fragment has no heading. It opens with the words, "I begin what may be called my diary from this point, January 25th, 1887"; and then goes on without any further preface, "I went down to lecture at Merton Abbey last Sun-

day." One of its most noticeable features is the keen and even excited interest he takes in the course of current politics, both domestic and international. This is not indeed surprising in itself, for the time was one of uncertainty and excitement, but it contrasts curiously with the tone of lordly indifference adopted in the official journal of the Socialist League towards things that lay outside their own movement. The extracts which follow show what immense labour he continued to spend in the service of the League, and how clearly nevertheless he saw the weakness of their machinery and the futility of the greater part of their efforts, and of his own.

"I went down to lecture at Merton Abbey last Sunday: the little room was pretty full of men, mostly of the labourer class: anything attacking the upper classes directly moved their enthusiasm; of their discontent there could be no doubt, or the sincerity of their class hatred: they have been very badly off there this winter, and there is little to wonder at in their discontent; but with a few exceptions they have not yet learned what Socialism means; they and Frank Kitz were much excited about the Norwich affair, and he made a very hot speech: he was much exercised about the police being all about the place, detectives inside and so on: I fancy their game is to try to catch the club serving non-members with beer or in some way breaking the law. But there is no doubt that there is a good deal of stir amongst the labourers about there; the place is wretchedly poor.

"I slept at Merton, and in the morning got the Norwich paper with a full account of the trial of Mowbray and Henderson; the Judge's summing up of the case was amusing and instructive, as showing a

sort of survival of the old sort of bullying of the Castlereagh times mixed with a grotesque attempt at modernization on philanthropical lines : it put me in a great rage.

"The Daily News printed my letter ; it had also a brief paragraph asserting that Germany would presently ask France the meaning of her war preparations, and an alarmist article therewith. I did not know but what the other papers had the same news, and was much excited at the idea : because whatever one may say, one cannot help hoping that such a huge turmoil as a European war could not fail to turn to some advantage for us. Coming to town however I found that the evening papers poh-poh it as a mere hurrying up of the belated Daily News. Yet there may be something in it.

"At the Council of the Socialist League in the evening : the Avelings there mighty civil, but took no part in the proceedings. A dullish meeting, both sides rather shy of the Norwich matter, which but for the heaviness of the sentences would be but a pitiful affair ; a committee was appointed to see after Mowbray's wife and children while he is *in :* a letter came from Norwich with the news of their having held a great meeting of 6,000 in the market-place on Sunday, at which they passed resolutions condemning the sentence, and in favour of the Social Revolution : though I fear few indeed out of the 6,000 knew what that meant. They were getting up a petition to the Home Secretary.

"Our attempt to get up an Irish meeting of the Radicals led by the Socialists will fail : we are not big enough for the job : the Radical clubs are civil to us but afraid of us, and not yet prepared to break with the Liberals. . . .

"Jan. 26th. Went to South Kensington Museum yesterday with Jenny to look at the Troy tapestry again since they have bought it for £1,250: I chuckled to think that properly speaking it was bought for me, since scarcely anybody will care a damn for it. A. Cole showed us a lot of scraps of woven stuff from the tombs of Upper Egypt; very curious as showing in an unusual material the transition to the pure Byzantine style from the Classical: some pieces being nothing but debased Classical style, others purely Byzantine, yet I think not much different in date; the contrast between the bald ugliness of the Classical pieces and the great beauty of the Byzantine was a pleasing thing to me, who loathe so all Classical art and literature. I spoke in the evening at the Hammersmith Radical Club at a meeting to condemn the Glenbeigh evictions, the room crowded, and of course our Socialist friends there; my speech was well received, but I thought the applause rather hollow, as the really Radical part of the audience had clearly no ideas beyond the ordinary party shibboleths, and were quite untouched by Socialism: they seemed to me a very discouraging set of men; but perhaps can be got at somehow—the frightful ignorance and want of impressibility of the average English workman floors me at times.

"27th. I went to Merton yesterday on a lovely day. Wardle told me the whole story of what they are doing and are going to do at St. Mark's at Venice. I was incoherent with rage: they will soon finish up the whole thing there—and indeed everywhere else. . . .

"Parliament is to meet to-day: that is not of much importance to 'we-uns': it is a matter of course that if the Government venture to bring for-

ward a gagging-bill they will not venture to make it anything but an Irish one. For my part I should rather like the Liberals to get in again: for if they do, they must either push on the revolution by furthering Irish matters, which will be a direct gain to us; or they must sneak out of the Irish question, which would be an indirect gain to us, but a far greater one, as it would turn all that is democratic sick of them. It seems that they by no means want to get in, and I don't wonder, considering that dilemma.

"News this morning that Goschen has lost Liverpool. . . . It is curious to see how equally the parties are balanced in the electorate, by the way: and this again is hopeful for us, because it will force the Liberals to be less and less democratic, and so consolidate the Party of Reaction.

"Feb. 3rd. Went down to Rottingdean on Friday 28th and spent three or four days there: was very glad to leave the Newspapers alone while there: did Homer and an article for Commonweal. . . . I was very loth to come back; though as for holidays 'tis a mistake to call them rests: one is excited and eager always; at any rate during a short holiday, and I don't know what a long one means. The ordinary drifting about of a 'busy' man is much less exciting than these sort of holidays. . . .

"Feb. 7th (Monday). On Friday I went up to the Chiswick club, where Mordhurst (one of our Hammersmith Branch) was to have opened a debate on the Class-war, but as he didn't turn up, I was called on to take his place: the room was not large; about twenty people there at first, swelling to forty perhaps before the end: the kind of men composing the audience is a matter worth noting, since the chief purpose of this diary is to record my impressions on the Socialist

movement. I should say then that the speakers were all either of the better-to-do workmen or small tradesmen class, except Gordon Hogg, who is a doctor. . . . My Socialism was gravely listened to by the audience, but taken with no enthusiasm, and in fact however simply one puts the case for Socialism one always rather puzzles an audience : the speakers, except Hogg and a young timid member of our branch, were muddled to the last degree ; but clearly the most intelligent men did not speak : the debate was adjourned till next Friday, but I was allowed a short reply in which I warmed them up somehow. This description of an audience may be taken for almost any other at a Radical club, *mutatis mutandis*. The sum of it all is that the men at present listen respectfully to Socialism, but are perfectly supine and not in the least inclined to move except along the lines of Radicalism and Trades' Unionism. . . .

"Yesterday (Sunday) we began our open-air meetings at Beadon Road, near the Broadway there. I spoke alone for about an hour, and a very fair audience (for the place, which is out of the way) gathered curiously quickly ; a comrade counted a hundred at most. This audience characteristic of small open-air meetings, also quite mixed, from labourers on their Sunday lounge to 'respectable' people coming from church : the latter inclined to grin : the working men listening attentively trying to understand, but mostly failing to do so : a fair cheer when I ended, of course led by the three or four Branch members present. . . .

"Feb. 12th. I have been on League business every night this week till to-night" (Saturday). "Monday the Council meeting peaceable enough, and dull. . . . Tuesday I took the chair at the meeting to protest against the (possible) coming war at Cleveland Hall

Cleveland St., a wretched place once flash and now sordid, in a miserable street. It is the head-quarters of what I should call the orthodox Anarchists: Victor Dave the leading spirit there. Of course there were many 'foreigners' there, and also a good sprinkling of our people and I suppose of the Federation also. It was rather hard work getting through all the speeches in the unknown tongues of French and German, and the natives showed their almost superstitious reverence for internationalism by sitting through it all patiently: the foreign speakers were mostly of the 'orthodox Anarchists'; but a Collectivist also spoke, and one at least of the Autonomy section, who have some quarrel which I can't understand with the Cleveland Hall people: a Federation man spoke though he was not a delegate; also Macdonald of the Socialist Union: the Fabians declined to send on the grounds of the war-scare being premature: but probably in reality because they did not want to be mixed up too much with the Anarchists: the Krapotkine-Wilson people also refused on the grounds that bourgeois peace *is* a war, which no doubt was a genuine reason on their part and is true enough. . . . On Wednesday I went to lecture at a schoolroom in Peckham High Street. . . . Thursday I went to the Ways and Means Committee at the League: found them cheerful there on the prospects of Commonweal. I didn't quite feel as cheerful as the others, but hope it may go on. Friday I went in the evening to finish the debate begun last week: the room full. Sparling made a good speech; I didn't.

"Feb. 16th. Sunday I spoke on a very cold windy (N.E.) morning at the Walham Green Station: the people listened well though the audience was not large, about 60 at the most. . . . I lectured on 'Me-

diæval England' to a good audience here in the evening: lecture rather 'young'.

"Monday, Council meeting very quiet and short. . . . In the afternoon Bax called with Champion, who thinks of starting a new weekly, a private paper not so much a party journal as Commonweal, and bigger, as he is to be backed by money. He wanted my goodwill, which he is welcome to; but I distrust the long endurance of a paper at all commercial, unless there is *plenty* of money at its back. Champion spoke in a friendly way and was quite open and reasonable; but seems out of spirits about the movement: he has been extremely over-sanguine about getting people to 'show their strength,' which of course they won't do at present, as soon as it looks dangerous, and so he is correspondingly depressed at the poor performance of the Social Democratic Federation in agitation lately.

"Next Sunday they are going to have a 'Church-parade,' at St. Paul's: but unless they can get an enormous crowd, it will be a silly business, and if they do there will be a row; which got up in this way I think a mistake; take this for my word about the sort of thing: if a riot is quite spontaneous it does frighten the bourgeois even if it [is] but isolated; but planned riots or shows of force are no good unless in a time of action, when they are backed by the opinion of the people and are in point of fact indications of the rising tide. . . .

"Feb. 23rd. I had a sort of threat of gout the last days of last week, so kept myself quiet at home.

"Sunday for same reason I did not speak out of doors. I went to Mitcham (the branch) on Sunday evening and spoke extemporary to them at their club-room, a tumble-down shed opposite the grand new workhouse built by the Holborn Union: amongst the

woeful hovels that make up the worse (and newer) part of Mitcham, which was once a pretty place with its old street and greens and lavender fields. Except a German from Wimbledon (who was in the chair) and two others who looked like artisans of the painter or small builder type, the audience was all made up of labourers and their wives: they were very quiet and attentive except one man who was courageous from liquor, and interrupted sympathetically: but I doubt if most of them understood anything I said; though some few of them showed that they did by applauding the points. I wonder sometimes if people will remember in times to come to what a depth of degradation the ordinary English workman has been reduced; I felt very downcast amongst these poor people in their poor hutch whose opening I attended some three months back (and they were rather proud of it). There were but about 25 present: yet I felt as if I might be doing some good there. . . .

"Monday was Council-night again, and I attended. Poor Allman had been before the magistrate that day and fined 40*s*., and was sent to jail in default of payment: his offence was open-air preaching close to the meeting-place of the Hackney Branch: so we are beginning our troubles early this year; which is a great nuisance; but I don't see what is to be done: we can't give up street-preaching in spite of what Bax and one or two others say about its uselessness: yet the police if they persist can put us down; and unless we can get up a very good case of causeless interference on their part, and consequent presumption of unfairness against us, we shall not be able to enlist the Radical clubs on our side, which is our only chance. At the Council we agreed not to pay Allman's fine, as he cried out loudly against it; and I believe meant it,

as he is a courageous little man. . . . I may note here for the benefit of well-to-do West-enders that the police are incredibly rough and brutal to the poor people in the East end; and that they treated Allman very ill. . . . I may as well say here that my intention is if possible to prevent the quarrel coming to a head between the two sections, parliamentary and anti-parliamentary, which are pretty much commensurate with the Collectivists and Anarchists: and this because I believe there would be a good many who would join the Anarchist side who are not really Anarchists, and who would be useful to us: indeed I doubt if, except one or two Germans, etc., we have any real Anarchists amongst us: and I don't want to see a lot of enthusiastic men who are not very deep in Socialist doctrines driven off for a fad of the more pedantic part of the Collectivist section. . . .

"Yesterday all day long with Bax trying to get our second article on Marx together: a very difficult job: I hope it may be worth the trouble.

"News of the German elections to-day: the Socialists seem to be going to lose seats (and no wonder considering Bismarck's iron fist), but they are gaining numbers according to the voting.

"Sparling went down on Monday night to Reading to try to found a branch, after the good reception which he and Carruthers had there last week: but it was a dead failure: a good many had given their names to attend, but when it came to the scratch 'with one consent they all began to make excuse': I note this because it is characteristic of the present stage of the movement; for as above said there was plenty of agreement at the meetings we have held there. This hanging-back is partly fear of being boycotted by the masters; but chiefly from dislike to

organization, for a question which the 'respectable' political parties ignore; and also fear of anything like revolt or revolution. . . .

"March 3rd. Sunday I spoke at Beadon Road; fair attendance of the usual kind; I met a *posse* of horse police going to St. Paul's *apropos* of the S.D.F.'s Church-parade there; and there were also a crowd of police at the Metropolitan station. . . .

"The S.D.F. Church-parade went off well: they ought not to spoil it by having inferior ones at small churches now; but should change the entertainment. Which remark points to the weak side of their tactics: they must always be getting up some fresh excitement, or else making the thing stale and at last ridiculous; so that they are rather in the position of a hard-pressed manager of a theatre—what are they to do next? . . .

"March 9th. It is clear that the Government is in a shaky condition. The Union Liberals are beginning to see that the cat is going to jump the other way: Trevelyan made a speech at Devonshire House this week as good as renouncing the Tory alliance: so it seems the Liberal party is to be re-united on the basis of a Compromise Home Rule Bill; which will last as long as the Irish find convenient. Meantime the Government are threatening a very harsh Coercion Bill: indeed I shouldn't wonder if they were to make it as stiff as possible in order to insure their own defeat, and then were to appeal to the country on the ground of law and order. All this is blessed bread to us, even the re-union of the Liberal party; because after all, that means the Whigs still retaining their hold of it, the stripping it more and more of anything which could enable it to pose as a popular party; while on the other hand it cripples the Radicals, and

takes away all chance of their forming a popular party underneath the more advanced Liberals: so that in politics the break-up of the old parties and the formation of a strong reactionary party goes on apace. . . .

"Sunday I went to the new premises of the Hoxton Branch (the Labour Emancipation League) to lecture: I rather liked it: a queer little no-shaped slip cut off from some workshop or other, neatly whitewashed, with some innocent decoration obviously by the decorator member of the branch: all very poor but showing signs of sticking to it: the room full of a new audience of the usual type of attenders at such places: all working men except a parson in the front row, and perhaps a clerk or two, the opposition represented by a fool of the debating club type; but our men glad of any opposition at all. I heard that our branch lecture was a wretched failure. The fact is our branch, which was very vigorous a little time ago, is sick now; the men want some little new thing to be doing or they get slack in attendance. I must try to push them together a bit. I attended the Council meeting on Monday. It was in the end quarrelsome. . . . We passed a resolution practically bidding our speakers not to draw on quarrels with the police: though I doubt if they will heed it often: as some of them are ambitious of figuring as heroes in this 'free-speech' business. This is a pity; as if the police stick to it, they can of course beat us in the long run: and we have more out-a-door stations already than we can man properly. . . .

"March 20th. The annual meeting of our Hammersmith Branch came off: a dead failure, as all our meetings except the open-air ones have been lately. However I really think the savage second winter has had something to do with it; we have had

a hard frost for nearly a fortnight now, and often a bitter blast of the N.E. with it; and our stable-meeting-room is not very warmable under such conditions.

"I lectured in the Chiswick Club Hall and had a scanty audience *and* a dull. It was a new lecture, and good, though I say it, and I really did my best; but they hung on my hands as heavy as lead. The open-air meeting at Walham Green in the morning was very creditable considering the cold weather and the underfoot misery.

"March 24th. 53 years old to-day—no use grumbling at that."

The diary is continued for a month longer, but becomes more fragmentary as it goes on, and is filled in at longer intervals. On the 27th of April it ends, with the note, "I have been busy about many things, and so unable to fill up this book."

Among these many things was his Odyssey. "I have just finished the 16th book," he writes to his daughter on the 18th of February, "and am getting the first volume through the press." This first volume was published early in April, and the second volume followed in November. It was received with the respect due to its merits. The first edition was sold out in six weeks: but it never became really popular, nor has it taken a place as the standard English version of Homer. It is perhaps one of the cases in which the disparity between the nature of the original and the method of rendering is no less vital because it lies below the surface. When Morris published the translation of the Æneid, the first criticism that occurred to many of his readers was that Homer rather than Virgil, and of the Homeric poems the Odyssey rather than the Iliad, was what he would render with the greatest sympathy and success. This may now be doubted.

Notwithstanding his deep love and admiration for the Icelandic epics, notwithstanding the essentially Homeric tone of his own great Volsung epic, the romantic element in Virgil was perhaps more nearly akin to his own most intimate poetical instincts than the broader and more impersonal treatment which puts the Iliad and Odyssey in a class of poetry by themselves. It may further be questioned whether the metre chosen, admirably as it represents the Greek hexameter as regards length of line and rapidity of movement, is not one which lays traps for a translator by the very ease and variation of which its rhythm admits.

Morris prided himself upon the fidelity of his version to the original: "My translation is a real one so far," he wrote of it to Ellis while it was in progress, "not a mere periphrase of the original as *all* the others are." But a translation, whether of Homer or of any other great poet, which sets out to be literal, must of necessity incur the risk of a certain flatness and commonness in passages where the original is only poetical by virtue of some untransferable quality. More especially is this the case in rendering from the Greek. That wonderful language almost makes poetry of itself; it is at once the model and the despair of all other languages. A translation which aims at a high standard of literal accuracy doubles the difficulty, in any case immensely great, of reproducing the continuous dignity and elevation of Homer. And a metre of loose structure invites the evasion of difficulties which are perhaps insoluble, and at all events are not solved in the least by being evaded. The epic hexameter, with all its elasticity, is accurately uniform in its metrical structure: it carries the poem forward unswervingly and unfalteringly. But the Sigurd-metre of Morris's Odyssey, with an elasticity equal to that

of the Greek hexameter itself, and a power (due to the great variation of which it admits) of attaining certain astonishing effects, suffers from this very quality in a tendency to relapse into formlessness. It is apt to revert into the mere inchoate metre from which it and the hexameter are both historical evolutions.

This tendency acts in two ways: in one way by stripping the metre, as one might say, to the bone. The couplet,

> They sat and fell to feasting, and men of worth rose up
> And poured the wine unto them in many a golden cup,

goes back to the metre of the Niebelungenlied, of Nævius's "Punic War," and in all probability of the last Greek epics, out of which was gradually evolved what we know by the name of Homer. But on the other hand it is apt to become overloaded. In lines like

> Whether he should pray to the fair-faced, laying hand upon her knee,

or,

> Bides she still with my child, and steadfast yet guardeth all my good?

the laxity of the metre allows it to pass into something that is barely metrical. In original writing the ear and taste of a good craftsman will keep him safe from both extremes. But in a translation, as all translators know, there is a temptation almost irresistible to take advantage of any licence the metre allows, a little here and a little there, till at last the accumulated result goes far beyond what the translator had meant or what the reader can readily approve. This is the reason why a successful verse translation, be it of Homer or

Virgil or any other great poet, must be executed in a metre of accurate structure.

Morris was too conscientious an artist, and too deeply in sympathy with the spirit of the Saga, whether Greek or Northern, to make things easier for his readers by modernizations of language or sentiment, or by slurring whatever in the original is weak, or verbose, or in any way repellent to modern feeling. There is a measure of truth in what he said of the translation himself before it appeared: "I don't think the public will take to it; it is too like Homer." In fact, when due allowance is made for this defect in the medium chosen, one may well wonder that in a language which is so different from Greek, and which, with all its own merits, has so little of the specific Greek beauty, Morris succeeded in producing such radiant effects as he does. And if his translation has not become the standard English version, it is only because that place still remains empty.

Of another kind of calls on his time there is a ludicrous instance in a letter to his daughter written this spring. "Comes me here on Tuesday one of our Oxford Street chaps and says will I go call on a lady near Hans Place about some decoration. So yesterday I go—grumbling, but thinking like John Gilpin about the loss of pence: and coming to Hans Place find it a very architectooralooral region: knock at the door: am shown into the drawing-room, when enter to me a lady who, after a very short preamble, requests me to look at some decoration that *she* was doing in the poker-style you know, burning the pattern in: and with a view of my helping her to a sale of these articles; her husband by the way being a swell in the War Office. My dear, the impudence of women is great; ask your Mama if she don't think so. More-

over I was too much amused, and also flabbergasted, to walk out of the house without a word, so I had to finish my morning call with great gravity; a morning call also for which I can't see my way for charging. How May did laugh at me when I came home!"

"I must tell you, my dear," he says in another letter a little later, "that I am getting famous, or at least notorious, in Hammersmith town. The other day opposite the Nazareth a covered greengrocer's cart hailed me as 'Socialist!' and then as 'Morris!' I don't think this was meant to be complimentary. Also a week ago as I was going down Rivercourt Road, lo a small boy, chubby, about seven years old, sitting swinging on one of the iron gates, very uncomfortably I should think, as they have sort of cabbage ornaments, sings out to me: 'Have a ride, Morris!' At these two places I was known: but last Sunday it befel me to go to Victoria Park (beyond Bethnal Green) to a meeting. Now I have mounted a cape or cloak, grey in colour, so that people doubt whether I be a brigand or a parson: this seemed too picturesque for some 'Arrys who were passing by, and sung out after me, 'Shakespeare, yah!'"

All through that hot summer of the Queen's Jubilee he stayed in London, busily trying to keep the Socialist League together, and working hard at Merton against the continued depression of trade, but not too anxious to enjoy life in a way that he could hardly have done the year before. A few extracts from letters written during these summer months may be added here.

"I am trying to get the League to make peace with each other and hold together for another year. It is a tough job; something like the worst kind of pig-driving I should think, and sometimes I lose my

temper over it. It is so bewilderingly irritating to see perfectly honest men, very enthusiastic, and not at all self-seeking, and less stupid than most people, squabble so: and withal for the most part they are personally good friends together."

"It was almost too good to be true to hear the rain tinkling on the leaves when I woke about half-past four, and O how pleasant it did feel! I have looked at Lewis Morris's Ode; and looked away from it in wonder why people write odes: as Huck Finn would say, if I had a yaller dog that took to writing odes I would shoot him."

"On Tuesday our water-party did actually come off, Aglaia, Opie and Mr. Leaf being the other ones besides Janey, Jenny and self. It turned out quite a success; we went by train to Richmond and then took a boat and went up to Hampton Court by slow degrees, rowing, sailing, and towing. We got to the Palace just half an hour before closing-time of the building, but didn't mind about that. Our other male-man got out coming back at Surbiton, so that we were rather late; didn't get to Teddington Lock till after 8; so that it was full night when we came out of it. So I had to set poor Aglaia to steer in the dark, or the dusk rather, as Jenny is short-sighted and Janey was too tired, and the two girls had been rowing a good bit already, so that I had to row till we were close to Richmond again. Aglaia was (naturally) nervous and kept on mistaking 'nature's boskage,' or its shadow rather, for barges: but she did very well after all and we mightily enjoyed ourselves; Jenny especially, who was delighted with the night rowing and the glitter of the lights of Richmond Hill in the water, and the rather terrifying mysteries of a river by night.

"An improvement is to be noted at Hampton Court

by the way. They have cleaned the tapestries; and taken the piece that used to be under the gallery and hung it in the Drawing Room so that it is quite visible, and have added another piece to it which I have never seen before and which is very fine. The Triumph of Time, also at the end of the Drawing Room, now it is cleaned shows a most splendid work: also they have opened a small room next to the Drawing Room, and that also is hung with tapestries, inferior to these, but still very beautiful."

"This morning, as it is fresh and fair after the rain, I am going to throw dull care away and have a holiday, to wit I am going to Hampton Court *by myself* to look at the tapestries and loaf about the gardens."

"I don't know if you saw an article about the Working Men's Clubs in the Daily News t'other day. I who know a good deal about these institutions grinned sardonically at its conventional rose-water. There is only a very small nucleus of really political working men: at Chiswick with a membership of 300 there are about 14 who interest themselves in politics: the Hackney Club 1,600 members, and about 100 political ones. Sunday beer, and weekday cards and billiards, are the real attraction. Moreover quite in contradiction to what the D. N. states, the only political working men's clubs at all that are even worth mentioning are much infused with Socialism."

"I have had one holiday this week: I went to see the Flowers (human) at Tangley Manor. It is a very beautiful old house: the old 14th century hall, at least its chief beam, being built up into a house of 1582. I grudged the vanishing of the older house in spite of the beauty of the other. A moat it has and a stone wall with holes in it, and many things desired by the righteous; and the country around is pleasant.

But Lord! if I lived there, what a state of terror I should be in lest they should begin to build up round about. There is a beautiful pile of old barns fronting it which does not belong to Flower, but to a man who thinks that he looks upon them as an eyesore and wants to buy them to pull them down; and therefore he keeps them up, in order to stimulate Flower to bid a higher price for the land than it is worth."

"I have now" (August 25th) "committed the irremediable error of finishing the Odyssey, all but a little bit of fair-copying. I am rather sad thereat."

"It is a beautiful bright autumn morning here, as fresh as daisies: and I am not over-inclined for my morning preachment at Walham Green, but go I must, as also to Victoria Park in the afternoon. I had a sort of dastardly hope that it might rain. Mind you, I don't pretend to say that I don't like it in some way or other, when I am on my legs. I fear I am an inveterate word-spinner and not good for much else."

"I had three very good days at Kelmscott" (in September): "once or twice I had that delightful quickening of perception by which everything gets emphasized and brightened, and the commonest landscape looks lovely; anxieties and worrits, though remembered, yet no weight on one's spirits—Heaven in short. It comes not very commonly even in one's younger and brighter days, and doesn't quite leave one even in the times of combat."

Late in that autumn was produced the most singular of all Morris's literary adventures, the little play entitled "The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened." "I have been writing," he says on the 24th of September, "a—what?—an 'interlude' let's call it, to be acted at Farringdon Road for the benefit of Common-

weal." It was performed there on the 15th of October, Morris himself acting in it, and was so successful that it was repeated three times. The dramatic form was one which he had essayed long before in a very different material. "Sir Peter Harpdon's End," "The Fall of Troy," and "Love is Enough," are a trilogy which is strangely concluded by this satyric piece.

In the contemporary theatre and in the modern actor's art Morris had not, and never affected to have, the slightest interest. From a very different point of view, he had for many years come to the same conclusion as Matthew Arnold in pronouncing the modern English theatre the most debased in Europe. Since the days of his early enthusiasm for Robson and Kean he hardly ever had gone to a play, unless on some rare occasion when he took his children or was dragged off by a friend. Nor has "The Tables Turned" anything that can be called a plot, any dramatic artifice, or any characterization beyond that of a mediæval mystery play. "If he had started a Kelmscott Theatre," says one of the most enthusiastic and most paradoxical of his followers, "instead of the Kelmscott Press, I am quite confident that in a few months, without going half a mile afield for his company, he would have produced work that would within ten years have affected every theatre in Europe." As a personal impression this assertion is interesting, but unverifiable. As a matter of fact nothing came of the experiment in which the method of the Townley Mysteries was applied to a modern farce. "Morris was so interested," the critic just quoted adds, "by his experiment in this sort of composition that he for some time talked of trying his hand at a serious drama, and would no doubt have done it had there been any practical occasion for it, or any means of consummating it by stage

representation under proper conditions, without spending more time on the job than it was worth. It was impossible for such a born teller and devourer of stories as he was to be indifferent to an art which is nothing more than the most vivid and real of all ways of storytelling." It is certainly true that he was just then casting about for some new method of expressing the thought working inside him, and getting rid of his superabundant creative energy. So it had always been in all his practice of the arts: no sooner had he mastered one art—were it illuminating, or carpet-weaving, or narrative poetry—than he passed eagerly on to master another: and just now, "rather lost," as he says, "with the conclusion of my Odyssey job, and on the look-out for another," he may have thought now and then of the dramatic form as one in which he might begin a new and interesting series of researches and experiments in order to recover, as in the other arts, the dropped thread of the mediæval tradition. But if so, it was not seriously, nor for long: and in the series of prose romances which he began soon afterwards, and which were continued through the remaining years of his life, he found a vehicle of new expression more satisfying to his imagination and better suited to his familiar methods.

The part which Morris himself took in the play was that of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who was supposed to have been called as a witness for the defence in a police prosecution of a member of the Socialist League. The charge was one of obstruction and incitement to riot by speaking from a stool (as Morris so often did) on a Sunday forenoon at Beadon Road, Hammersmith. "Under the pretext of paying a visit to my brother of London," the Archbishop had got into a cab and gone off to see what these Socialist meetings

were like. "To the best of my remembrance," he states in evidence, "there were present at the commencement of your discourse but three persons exclusive of yourself"—namely, a colleague of the lecturer, the Archbishop himself, and a small boy. The discourse "was a mass of the most frightful incendiarism. He even made an attack on my position, stating (wrongly) the amount of my moderate stipend." The audience, he further states, had increased to ten by the time the orator concluded. The scene, which was received by the audience, most of them familiar with those Sunday street meetings, with uncontrolled amusement, gave the ludicrous side of a bitter truth. Often Morris had himself spoken, both in doors and out of doors, to as small an audience. A few months earlier, a lecture on Feudal England, into which no other man alive could have put an equal combination of historical knowledge, imaginative insight, and romantic sympathy, had been delivered to an audience of nine people, not one of whom probably understood what it was about. That such entire public apathy regarding the Socialist ideal should co-exist with the presence of revolution actually at the door (the trial in this play is broken off by its triumphal outbreak) is a situation well enough suited for a farce which is intentionally and wildly extravagant. But it seems that even then the combination was one in which the more ardent members of the League had not in the least abandoned belief.

For that strange belief, in which Morris no doubt had once to a certain degree shared ("as his way was about everything, to make it something different from what it was," the habit of boyhood surviving undiminished into mature life), the events of the next month in London gave some sort of colour. A long-

continued depression of trade had made the question of the unemployed, in London and elsewhere, more than usually serious; and the restlessness among the working classes culminated in the famous scenes of the 13th of November, "Bloody Sunday," in and round Trafalgar Square. A meeting in the Square had been announced to protest against the Irish policy of the Government: it had been proclaimed by the police, and became converted into a demonstration on a huge scale. No one who saw it will ever forget the strange and indeed terrible sight of that grey winter day, the vast sombre-coloured crowd, the brief but fierce struggle at the corner of the Strand, and the river of steel and scarlet that moved slowly through the dusky swaying masses when two squadrons of the Life Guards were summoned up from Whitehall. Morris himself did not see it till all was nearly over. He had marched with one of the columns which were to converge on Trafalgar Square from all quarters. It started in good order to the number of five or six thousand from Clerkenwell Green, but at the crossing of Shaftesbury Avenue was attacked in front and on both flanks by a strong force of police. They charged into it with great violence, striking right and left indiscriminately. In a few minutes it was helplessly broken up. Only disorganized fragments straggled into the Square, to find that the other columns had also been headed off or crushed, and that the day was practically over. Preparations had been made to repel something little short of a popular insurrection. An immense police force had been concentrated, and in the afternoon the Square was lined by a battalion of Foot Guards, with fixed bayonets and twenty rounds of ball cartridge. For an hour or two the danger was imminent of street-fighting such as had not been known

in London for more than a century. But the organized force at the disposal of the civil authorities proved sufficient to check the insurgent columns and finally clear the streets without a shot being fired. For some weeks afterwards the Square was garrisoned by special drafts of police. Otherwise London next day had resumed its usual aspect.

Once more the London Socialists had drawn into line with the great mass of the London Radicals, and a formidable popular movement had resulted, which on that Sunday was within a very little of culminating in a frightful loss of life and the practical establishment of a state of siege in London. But the English spirit of compromise soon made itself felt. While on the one hand the impotence of a London crowd against armed and drilled forces had been crushingly demonstrated, on the other hand the public were startled into seriousness. Measures were taken for the relief of the unemployed. Political Radicalism resumed its normal occupations; and by the end of the year the Socialist League had dropped back to its old place, a small body of enthusiasts among whom an Anarchist group were now beginning to assume a distinct prominence. The only other important public occasion in which Morris took part during the rest of the year was on the 18th of December. A young man named Alfred Linnell had died in hospital from injuries received from the police in the struggle of Bloody Sunday. A public funeral was organized. In pouring rain a great but orderly crowd marched through the mid-winter dusk from Soho to Bow Cemetery, where the burial service was read by the light of a lantern. The stately verses which Morris wrote for the occasion are well known. Less known, but perhaps not less worthy of remembrance, is the brief

speech which he delivered over the grave. The other speakers—Mr. Tims of Battersea, Mr. Dowling of the Irish National League, Mr. Quelch of the Social Democratic Federation—had improved the occasion with obvious sincerity, but in phrases that were rapidly becoming mere commonplaces of journalism and losing any definite meaning: protesting against what they described as the autocracy of the police, speaking of hired murderers in uniform, and a ruling class trembling in its shoes. Morris's words, spoken to a crowd fast melting away in the darkness and rain, tried to recall the larger and nobler issue. "Our friend who lies here has had a hard life, and met with a hard death; and if society had been differently constituted, his life might have been a delightful, a beautiful, and a happy one. It is our business to begin to organize for the purpose of seeing that such things shall not happen; to try and make this earth a beautiful and happy place."

"The scene at the grave," he writes a few days afterwards, "was the strangest sight I have ever seen, I think. It was most impressive to witness; there was to me something aweful (I can use no other word) in such a tremendous mass of people, unorganized, unhelped, and so harmless and good-tempered."

This feeling of pity for the helplessness of the masses had throughout stood alongside of his indignation at the practical barbarism of the commercial system as the dominant force in his mind. When he saw the multitudes—if we may recall in so different a context the august words of the Evangelist—he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd. The direct result of all his efforts to bring them together and lead them on was indeed little

enough. The smallness of the numbers of really convinced supporters, however much the opportunist section of English Socialists might try to swell them out by various bodies of men in buckram, was a fact to which he never blinded himself, nor was he less keenly alive to the prodigious difficulty of accustoming men's minds in England to conceive the possibility of any changes being effected by other than the familiar Parliamentary methods. "I have always known," he writes on the 26th of February, 1887, to Ellis, "that if ever there were a Socialist *party* in England they would have to send men to Parliament, though I certainly wouldn't be one of them. But 'tis no more use a *sect* blustering about getting itself 'represented' than it is about its conquering the world by dynamite and battle. 'Tis barely possible to get a Radical returned as a Radical, let alone a Socialist. Still things have moved much within the last four years, and they will no more stop for the capitalists than they will hurry for me." But it was not all waste labour. "Men fight and lose the battle," says John Ball, "and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant." The silent permeation of a new spirit was making itself felt. The doctrines on which Socialism is founded were slowly beginning to modify common thought. Education towards revolution, Morris's own watchword as a Socialist, was in one sense or another rapidly becoming the order of the day. In the larger sphere of politics a change of tone was beginning to be manifest. Significant utterances began to be heard from supporters of the existing organization. The celebrated words, "We are all Socialists now," had already been uttered by an ex-Minister in the House of Commons.

Professed Socialists had been invited to read papers at the Church Congress, and a Bishop had startled his colleagues by publicly declaring the contrast between the rich and poor to be so appalling that serious consideration was due to any scheme, no matter how revolutionary, that promised relief. And about Morris himself a group of artists and craftsmen were gathering, who, without following his principles to their logical issues or joining any Socialist organization, were profoundly permeated with his ideas on their most fruitful side, that of the regeneration, by continued and combined individual effort, of the decaying arts of life. Among these men, a small body, but growing in numbers, strong in youth, ardent in assured conviction, Morris's final words on the Beauty of Life were at last working with their full force. "To us who have a cause at heart, our highest ambition and our simplest duty are one and the same thing. For the most part we shall be too busy doing the work that lies ready to our hands to let impatience for visibly great progress vex us much. And surely, since we are servants of a cause, hope must be ever with us."

Cela est bien dit, répondit Candide, mais il faut cultiver notre jardin. Such too had been the last word of the despised eighteenth century.

CHAPTER XVIII

SIGNS OF CHANGE: THE ARTS AND CRAFTS: RETURN TO ROMANCE

1888-1889

This group of craftsmen were drawn together from many different quarters and worked in very various methods; but each in his own sphere, all alike consciously aimed at a Renaissance of the decorative arts which should act at once through and towards more humanized conditions of life both for the workman and for those for whom he worked. There were few if any among them who would not readily have acknowledged Morris as their master. The seed sown twenty-seven years before in the little workshop in Red Lion Square had long been silently and unostentatiously bearing fruit. Of those whose practice had long been moulded by Morris's influence, there were not a few for whom the ideas which underlay the whole of his work had, when they took definite shape as a body of doctrine, added a quickened impulse and a higher enthusiasm. Socialism, less as a definite creed or a dogmatic system than as a way of looking at human life and the meaning of the arts, was widely diffused among a younger generation of artists. Among these Mr. Walter Crane, by his versa-

tility and energy, as well as the acknowledged excellence of his artistic work, held a leading place. Mr. T. J. Cobden-Sanderson brought to the movement an energy as great, united with the gift of a copious and persuasive eloquence. Among the younger men Mr. Heywood Sumner, Mr. W. R. Lethaby, and Mr. W. A. S. Benson may be singled out as prominent members of the group. Only a few out of the whole body were, either then or subsequently, professed Socialists. Some of them were Conservative or even ultra-Conservative in politics. But they all in their special lines of work carried out ideas of which Morris was the original source. To them, and to many others, he has been, both while he lived and afterwards, an inspiring and guiding influence of the first importance.

Alongside of this movement, or rather essentially included in it, was another movement towards a reintegration of labour, a practical socialism of handicraft as applied to the arts. This movement expressed itself in two ways. On the one hand it aimed at a new organization of work within the single workshop, so that the manager, the designer, and the artificer should cease to be three distinct persons belonging to different social grades, differently educated and differently employed, working without mutual sympathy, or even each in active hostility to the others. On the other hand it expressed itself in the co-ordination of these workshops, hitherto isolated units of productive energy, whether by means of formal guilds and associations, or through more intangible links of common ideas and kindred enthusiasms, into the beginnings of a trained organism of handicraftsmen, with a mutual intercommunication, and a cumulative force of trained intelligence. What Morris himself

had, in earlier days, done by the mere unassisted force of his own genius, was now being attempted on all sides with a conscious purpose. His own work in the early sixties had been based on two principles: the first, that nothing should be done in his workshops which he did not know how to do himself; and the second, that every form of decorative art could be subsumed under the single head of architecture, and had only a real life and intelligible meaning in its relation to the mistress-art, and through the mistress-art to all the other subordinate arts. Following out these principles, his pupils were now occupied, first, in learning what it was they had to deal with by actual work at the lathe, or the dye-vat, or the mason's yard, and then in forming, by the co-ordination and communication of this practical knowledge, the basis for a really popular art such as had not existed within the memory of men now living.

The sense of corporate life among this group of artists and workmen had by this time reached a point where it demanded some visible expression. There was already a sort of freemasonry among them. The Art Workers' Guild, established in March, 1884, had become a great influence towards solidarity. But now an increased motive power might, it was thought, be given to the movement by arranging for periodical public exhibitions of work done. These exhibitions were to be combined with some amount of instruction by acknowledged masters in both the theory and the practice of the various handicrafts. The beginning of this project has been dated from a correspondence which had been carried on some three years before in the Times on the subject of reform of the Royal Academy. It had long been a surprise or scandal to many that the Academy of Arts should

confine itself rigidly to painting and sculpture and what may be called abstract architecture, and should ignore all the other decorative and applied arts. But public opinion could not be roused to press for the reform of this bad tradition. The attempt to do so, not for the first or last time, came to nothing: and it was then that the suggestion arose of a separate exhibition of products of applied art. So early as 1858 the question had been raised by Madox Brown in connexion with the exhibitions held by the newly-founded Hogarth Club. The committee of the club had then refused to hang his designs for furniture, as not being examples of "fine art proper." Their decision was quite in consonance with the traditions of that day. But the Pre-Raphaelites themselves were strongly represented on the committee, and even among them the proposal found little or no favour. Probably this was due to a certain excessive purism which had its legitimate and intelligible source in the desire to withdraw art from all taint or suspicion of commercialism. In any case the decision then taken had practically put the matter off for a whole generation. Perhaps the delay was not without its uses.

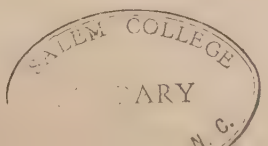
The first step towards carrying the scheme now once more suggested into actual working was taken by Mr. Benson, who, since he left Oxford in 1876, had been engaged first (like Morris himself) in an architect's office, and then in founding and carrying on a business as a decorative metal-worker and cabinet-maker, and had been throughout that time intimate with Morris on the side of theory and of practice alike. In concert with two or three others, he succeeded, early in 1886, in effecting the formation of a provisional committee of some five and twenty members. Nearly all of them were also members of

the Art Workers' Guild; and it was the existence of the Art Workers' Guild, Mr. Benson thinks, which made the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society possible. Of less import, but not without a large result both for good and harm on the new movement, were the various associations which had sprung up in recent years under the names of Home Arts, or Cottage Arts Societies, or Village Industries. These associations had been formed chiefly by the energy or caprice of individuals. Some of them were direct attempts at following the teaching of Ruskin. Others represented a mixture of charity and patronage, and their only effect was to multiply the productions of amateur incompetency. In a few cases, according to the view taken by skilled judges, good work had been produced by them, and in a few more, a slow but steady progress towards good work was visible; but on the whole they were of little value either as productive or as educational agencies.

The newly-formed association was at first known by the name of the Combined Arts. The name of the Arts and Crafts was the invention, at a somewhat later stage, of Mr. Cobden-Sanderson. He was also in the main responsible for another of the new departures made in the first Arts and Crafts Exhibition, that of publishing the names of the designer and executant as the joint-authors of any given piece of work which was exhibited.

That such a thing should be thought of at all marked a great advance from the ideas of a generation earlier. The large firms of decorators and furnishers looked on the notion with suspicion or contempt; and several of them refused point blank to have anything to do with a scheme under which the work of art should have any name attached to it

except that of the proprietor and vendor. It was contrary to their practice, and injurious, as they conceived, to their interests, that even their own "designer," the artist whom they paid to produce patterns for their workmen to execute, should be known by name, or have any substantive existence, or separate recognition, outside their workshops. As a body of designers—for such in the main they were—the members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society were fighting for their own hand in insisting that he should be so recognized. The further doctrine that the name of the executant workman should, where possible, be given, as well as that of the designer, was no doubt in a measure due to the working of Socialistic, or at all events semi-Socialistic ideas. To Morris, who had thought the whole matter out for years, and was never the victim of phrases, the point seemed a trivial one; it was not by printing lists of names in a catalogue that the status of the workman could be raised, or the system of capitalistic commerce altered in the slightest degree. As a matter of fact, this was essentially a designers' movement: and it was as such that Morris approached it. Any elements of militant Socialism which appeared in it came from other sources; and some of those who had been his own disciples, up to the measure of their capacity, in Socialist doctrine, were surprised, and a little indignant, at the cool view which Morris took of the "responsible executants" of his own designs, and the civil contempt with which he treated the rules and regulations framed by his colleagues or pupils. Here, as always whenever it came to be a question of practical production, he understood exactly how to make the best of things as they are, and was no more the slave of new theories than of old conventions.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Towards the movement which thus took shape, the way here, as in so many other instances, had been pointed out by the far-ranging genius of Ruskin long before any steps were, or could be, taken towards its realization. The prophet had, as usual, been long before his age. The whole of the Socialism with which Morris identified himself so prominently in the eighties had been implicitly contained, and the greater part of it explicitly stated, in the pages of "Unto This Last" in 1862, when Morris had just begun the work of his life as a manufacturer. And so now, the new movement in art, which has had so powerful an effect in the succeeding decade, took a direction which had been suggested by Ruskin ten years earlier. Writing to Morris on the 3rd of December, 1878, Ruskin, after thanking him for being the only person who went "straight to the accurate point of the craftsman's question," added these striking words: "How much good might be done by the establishment of an exhibition, anywhere, in which the Right doing, instead of the Clever doing, of all that men know how to do, should be the test of acceptance!" The times were not then ripe. But now this was one main object with which the Arts and Crafts Society was founded, and this was the test which, to the best of its power and will, it attempted to apply.

The project had taken form in the latter months of 1887. Morris, though for it, as for the whole movement out of which it sprang, he was so largely the ultimate source, had no share in its origination, and was at first, with his strong common sense, inclined to lay stress on the difficulties that stood in the way. "One thing will have to be made clear," he wrote on the last day of that year, "*i.e.*, who is to find the money. I can't help thinking on reflection that some

money will have to be dropped upon it: for I don't think (again on reflection) that you will find commercial exhibitors willing to pay rent for space, and the shillings at the door will not, I fear, come to much after the first week or two: the general public don't care one damn about the arts and crafts; and our customers can come to our shops to look at our kind of goods; and the other kind of exhibits would be some of Walter Crane's works and one or two of Burne-Jones: those would be the things worth looking at: the rest would tend to be of an amateurish nature, I fear. In short, at the risk of being considered a wet blanket, a Job, or Job's comforter, and all that sort of thing, I must say I rather dread the said exhibition: this is of course my private view of the matter, and also of course I wish it success if it comes off."

A month later he writes again: "I am convinced that the only time of the year available for the exhibition is from the middle of March to the middle of August. Any other time it would only be visited by the few who are really interested in the subject. Isn't it now too late to get the thing afoot during this period this year?"

But the scheme was already fairly afoot: and Morris seems to have under-estimated, not indeed the actual progress that had been made in the production of good work rightly done, but the amount of feeling towards such production which was stirring, and the amount of public interest which had been at last, though languidly and tardily, aroused in the difference between good and bad decorative art. When once the decision was taken, he gave the scheme his hearty support: and in this, as in the succeeding exhibitions held, his work attracted a wider and more intelligent interest than could have been counted upon. The

lectures and papers which he contributed had also a real stimulative and educative value. Limited as was the number of people interested in the subject, they were to be counted by hundreds where those interested in theoretic Socialism could be reckoned on the fingers of one hand. When he resumed educational work in connexion with what was, after all, his own proper subject, on which he spoke with the ease and authority of an absolute master, he may indeed have felt that he was not striking at the root, but must also have recognized that he was not spending his blows on the air.

The echoes of the Trafalgar Square disturbances died slowly away. Popular attention in England was soon transferred to the action of the Government in Ireland under the Crimes Act of 1887: but Morris refused to be so turned off the point. "As to Blunt and his imprisonment," he wrote on the 14th of January (Mr. Wilfrid Blunt was a personal friend of his own, for whom he had a great liking), "from what I hear, the Irish prisons are better than the English. I don't see that we take it quietly specially because it is in Ireland: there are dozens of poor fellows in prison in England over the Trafalgar Square business, some of them for four or six months, for the same offence as Blunt's, and I fear little enough is said about them. However it is a bad business enough, nor do I deny that an English prison is torture, and is meant to be so. Doubtless it is bad that political prisoners like Blunt and the so-called rioters should be treated as criminals; but then the criminals are not treated as if they were human beings. The whole prison system in its folly, stupidity, and cruelty, is a disgrace to mankind; and the treatment of political prisoners is only one instance."

But though there were crowded meetings to welcome the Trafalgar Square prisoners on their release, the excitement, so far as not artificially kept up by the temporary alliance between Socialists and Irish Home-Rulers in vindication of the right of free speech in both countries, had already dwindled away. "On the whole," Morris writes again in March, "I think things will be pretty quiet till next October or November, when it will begin simmering again. I have been reading Tolstoi's 'War and Peace,' which I find I can get through with much approbation but little enjoyment, and yet (to take the horse round to the other side of the cart) with a good deal of satisfaction. There seems to be a consensus of opinion in these Russian novels as to the curious undecided turn of the intellectual persons there: Hamlet (Shakespeare's I mean, not the genuine Amloði) should have been a Russian, not a Dane. This throws some light on the determination and straightforwardness of the revolutionary heroes and heroines there; as if they said, 'Russians must be always shilly-shally, letting I dare not wait upon I would, must they? Look here then, we will throw all that aside and walk straight to death.'

"I don't think I shall tackle 'Anna Karenina'; I want something more of the nature of a stimulant when I read. I am not in a good temper with myself: I cannot shake off the feeling that I might have done much more in these recent matters than I have; though I really don't know what I could have done: but I feel beaten and humbled. Yet one ought not to be down in the mouth about matters; for I certainly never thought that things would have gone on so fast as they have in the last three years; only, again, as opinion spreads, organization does not spread with it."

"The Dream of John Ball" was published as a book that month, and was followed two months later by the volume of lectures and addresses entitled "Signs of Change." This volume once cleared out of the way, his mind reverted with full force to the romance and simplicity of a remoter past. An epoch of swift change, even were it in the nature of progress, was distasteful to his temperament. He was continually seeking refuge from it in dreams of some settled and seeming-changeless order, whether seen as a vision of the future or recreated from a tradition of the past. The old world which he had summoned up in "John Ball" was one that had none of this stability. Its period was that of the breaking up of the mediæval system, and the beginnings of times of change, destruction and unsettlement. In the new romance which he now began to write, he went back from the close of the Middle Ages to their earliest beginnings, and from a complex artificial society to the simplest of all known to history. This story, "The House of the Wolfings," was the first of a series of prose romances which he went on writing almost continuously down to the end of his life.

"I am a little dispirited over our movement in all directions," he writes to Mrs. Burne-Jones on the 29th of July. "Perhaps we Leaguers have been somewhat too stiff in our refusal of compromise. I have always felt that it was rather a matter of temperament than of principle; that some transition period was of course inevitable, I mean a transition involving State Socialism and pretty stiff at that; and also, that whatever might be said about the reception of ideal Socialism or Communism, towards this State Socialism things are certainly tending, and swiftly too. But then in all the wearisome shilly-shally of parliamentary politics I

should be absolutely useless: and the immediate end to be gained, the pushing things just a trifle nearer to State Socialism, which when realized seems to me but a dull goal—all this quite sickens me. Also I know that there are a good many other idealists (if I may use that word of myself) who are in the same position, and I don't see why they should not hold together and keep out of the vestry-business, necessary as that may be. Preaching the ideal is surely always necessary. Yet on the other hand I sometimes vex myself by thinking that perhaps I am not doing the most I can merely for the sake of a piece of 'preciousness.'

"I have done another chapter to the tale, rather good I think, and shall get on with it as I can; and when finished shall set about revising before I get it into type."

The work of editing the Commonweal, which even in its first hopeful days had been unpleasant, had now in this altered frame of mind grown inexpressibly irksome. "I have been writing hard all the morning," he says on the 11th of August, "but not at what I like; have been simply pitching into Balfour and Salisbury, who will never see my scathing periods and wouldn't care if they did." The scathing periods, as they may still be found in the file of the Commonweal, make very dull reading now, as they made dull writing then. The only chances of writing what he liked that the scope of the Commonweal gave him he seized with avidity: just at this time he was in the middle of a vivid and detailed account of the Revolt of Ghent in the fourteenth century, including long passages of admirable translation from Froissart, which runs through the issues of seven weeks.

"I am prepared," he writes again a few weeks later, "to see all organized Socialism run into the sand for a

while. But we shall have done something even then, as we shall have forced intelligent people to consider the matter; and then there will come some favourable conjunction of circumstances in due time which will call for our active work again. If I am alive then I shall chip in again, and one advantage I shall have, that I shall know much better what to do and what to forbear than this first time."

In this settled low content he spent not an unhappy autumn, as a series of letters in August and September sufficiently show. But before quoting from these I may be pardoned for inserting a letter of the same autumn, addressed to "the baby of the lot" who had been children together through the past twenty years, Miss Margaret Burne-Jones. She was married this year on the 4th of September.

"Kelmscott House,
"August 21st, 1888.

"Dearest Margery,

"I have bidden our Mr. Smith to send you an 'article' called a Hammersmith Rug (made at Merton Abbey) which Janey and I ask you to take as a small and unimportant addition to your 'hards.' If it should at any time get dirty (as is likely, since London will not be pulled down for a few months, I judge) if you send it to Merton we can wash it as good as new.

"Also with this little gift take my hearty good wishes for your happiness, which you will easily believe are not at all conventional, since you will remember how prettily and dearly you have always behaved to me since you were a dear little child, in the days when I was really a young man, but thought myself rather old.

Also as the wish is not conventional, as really meaning what it says, so it is not conventional as saying something which I do not think will happen: as indeed I think you have every chance of being happy, both because of your fortunate surroundings, and your good choice, and especially because I think you have it in you to be happy, and to be all along the dear little child of those times I was reminding you of.

"I went away in a hurry last Sunday, which I was sorry for, as I should have liked to have said good-bye. But I shall hope to see you very soon after September.

"Meantime good-bye, and good luck in all senses of the word.

"Your affectionate friend,
"WILLIAM MORRIS."

The following are extracts from letters to his daughter Jenny at Malvern.

August 18th. "Well, my dear, as to Worcester I have only been there once, since the days when I sucked at a bottle, of which your Granny will tell you. That once was when I went to see my Aunts thirty years ago, and I was not so well informed on archæology as I am now. But I do remember Prince Arthur's Chantry and the tombs and also the general look of the Church. The town I don't remember except as a mass of red brick broken by a few half-timber houses.

"Yesterday I went to Birmingham all by myself to see the new window: my work was over there in five minutes, for it was quite satisfactory; it was rather a long journey for so short a piece of work. Well, I must tell you about the Norwich journey, my dear. We went down rather a jolly company though the day

was dull. The comrades work one pretty hard when they get hold of one in Norwich, and I left most of my voice behind me there. I spoke three times on the Sunday, twice in the market-place, once indoors, and twice in the market-place on the Monday, besides taking the chair for Mrs. Besant in the evening indoors; and being photographed (in groups) twice, and going a row (in five boats, cost 15*d.*) in the afternoon. However I enjoyed it all and was pleased that it was so successful: there were between seven and eight thousand people present at the meeting in the market-place on Sunday afternoon; and all the meetings were good. After the Sunday afternoon meeting Mrs. Besant proposed a walk, and we went down towards the Close; but Lord! such a tail as we took with us, including a lot of boys who were fascinated by us, expected I think to see us hanged presently; the others except the boys mostly tailed off when we got into the Close, but not the boys; the only resource we had was to cross the ferry at the other side of the Close, which charges ½*d.* for the transit; this threw out our younger brethren and we got away quietly.

"The river I went on was a branch of the Wensum; it was very beautiful; the water awash with the green banks, willows nearly meeting over the water; no rushes or reeds, no weeds except some kind of long grass growing up from the bottom, no stream scarcely, and the water deep and clear as glass. All quite different from the rivers I am used to: in fact I always feel in a foreign land when I go to Norwich."

August 21st. "I suppose your mother told you we are going down to Kelmscott to-day: you see your mother doesn't like it to eat its head off, and for my part I have been rather driven lately and want to be

quiet. I am taking down a piece of Oxford Street work which I must do, and I shall hope to get on with my story, perhaps nearly finish it."

August 28th. "We had a beautiful day on Sunday: we all went up the water along with Mr. Radford, who suddenly turned up on Saturday evening on a bicycle, asking for lodging, having come over from Didcot through Wantage. The morning opened most lovely; we started at eleven, and by twelve were sheltering ourselves from a driving rain under Mr. Birchall's yew tree; then it cleared a little, and we got to dinner close to where we dined so merrily, my dear, with Ellis, and lo by two the sun was hot and bright, and the day straight on most lovely. We got out at the Round House, and walked nearly a mile up the canal, which is really very pretty, the water without stream and clear and bright: it made me long for an expedition. Your mother and Crom and I went up to the Church afterwards over perilous ditch-bridges, leaving Radford and May lazing by the boat. It went to my heart on that beautiful afternoon to see the neglect and stupidity that had so marred the lovely little building: yet it still looked lovely. As we passed by Buscot, there were the Birchalls in their goat-mead, and we exchanged a few words with them, as we rather expected Walker to meet us: we had left the house quite empty of Frank and everybody, the key under the doormat and a letter pinned to the door for Walker, who duly came and walked on to meet us and fell in with us just as we were opening Buscot Lock. So we had a merry evening together, and I so wished you had been with us, my darling."

September 6th. "Yesterday the weather, which had been drizzly in the morning, clearing up somewhat in the afternoon, we set off about 2.30 to go to Rushey,

thinking we might get to Bampton, which your mother has never seen, and we got down there comfortably enough: we intended coming straight back by boat, as we seemed too late to get up to Bampton and back, (it is two miles from the lock there,) but strolling up towards the town over the fields we thought we would go there and get a trap for the ladies, and that Walker and I would go back and pull the boat home: so we did this; but Mrs. Walker could only go so slow that it was quite late before we got to Bampton. However we managed to see the church, which is a very fine one, but has been shockingly restored. There is Norman work in it, and transition; and a fine decorated nave with a most beautiful western doorway. The tower and spire is very pretty; much the same date as Broadwell but handsomer. Near the church is a very pretty little house used as a grammar school, and another house called the Deanery. The town is the queerest left-behind sort of a place: when Walker and I first came into the street there were two other persons visible, a small boy and a small girl. Well, it was nearly dark when W. and I set off to walk to Rushey, and quite dark before we were well under way. I had to steer all the way, as Walker didn't like the job. It was a very dark night with drizzle now and then, and often one could barely see the bank. However we scarcely touched the bank at all, and got in about 10 o'clock. Frank had been sent out with a lantern to meet us, and we perceived the same as we came to Welly-Hole Reach, looking like a 'bright particular star.' It seems he had been nearly down to the Old Weir to look for us."

The autumn holiday lingered late. On the 8th of October he wrote to Ellis, who had been staying with him at Kelmscott:

"I am really surprised at your not liking 'Tom Sawyer,' especially as it so *very* like Shakespeare, not to say Shelley.

"I went out in the afternoon of Saturday, and a most grim and stormy afternoon it was: I caught nothing except that just as I was going away a ½ lb. chub took my gudgeon and insisted on being caught. Saturday night was as cold as need be; but yesterday was better, and to-day is a mild beautiful morning: unhappily there is no river for me to-day, as we are all going to Fairford.

"I wish you had been here instead of the new comer, whose shortcomings I am not used to like I am to yours and mine; so that we have no standing cause of quarrel; which I think is a necessity to a really good understanding."

At the end of October, when "the river has grown small and bright and the fish won't bite," he regretfully left Kelmscott. On the 1st of November he lectured on Tapestry-weaving at the first Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Society, to the catalogue of which he had already contributed a short paper on Textiles. Three Arras tapestries from the Merton Abbey looms were among the objects exhibited. The great series of tapestries from the Morte d'Arthur now hung at Stanmore Hall were then being put in hand. "The House of the Wolfings," too, had been finished during the autumn, and was through the press early in December.

Apart from other reasons this book has a special interest as marking the beginning of Morris's practical dealings with the art of typography. Hitherto he had been content to let his books be printed in the common way, without any special attention to matters of type or arrangement of page. His attention had been

lately turned to the matter through an increasing intimacy with his neighbour at Hammersmith, Mr. Emery Walker, whose enthusiasm for fine printing was accompanied by a thorough practical acquaintance with it as a modern handicraft. The early printed books, which Morris had hitherto collected and prized mainly for their woodcuts, now took a fresh interest and value to him as specimens of beauty in type. In consultation with Mr. Walker he fixed on a fount of type belonging to Messrs. Whittingham for the new book. It had been cast as an experiment about half a century before, and was modelled on an old Basel fount; and it had already been used in some of the trial pages of the illustrated "Earthly Paradise" which had been set up in 1868. "It will be a pretty piece of typography for modern times," Morris said of the book before it appeared; and so pleased was he with it, that he could not bear for a while to hear any adverse criticism even on the demerits of the type, especially on an over-conspicuous e of the lower case which he silently altered in his next book, "The Roots of the Mountains."

The story itself well deserved the words "your delightful and wonderful book," with which it was hailed by Mr. Swinburne. For the first time since "The Earthly Paradise" had been completed, Morris was writing with complete enjoyment and perfect ease. The life of the Germanic tribes of Central Europe in the second or third century was one which was at once sufficiently known to allow of copious and detailed description and sufficiently undetermined to give full scope to a romantic imagination. The use, as the vehicle of the story, of a mixed mode of prose and verse, was a device not perhaps suited for frequent repetition, but excellently adapted for this particular

purpose. It was suggested by the Icelandic Sagas, but used in a fresh and quite delightful way. By the use of prose for the main narrative, he avoided the languor which is almost inseparable from verse as a medium of continuous narration; and in speeches and ornate passages, where prose in its turn would flag, the rolling verse—that of "Sigurd the Volsung" revived in much of its first freshness—seems the natural medium of the heightened emotion.

Like "The Roots of the Mountains," it belongs to what may be called the epic or Icelandic side of the author's imagination. In the later prose tales he reverted to a softer and sweeter world, that of a vaguely mediæval life, with churches in it and houses of monks, and a faint air of the thirteenth century, the world of his own earlier masterpiece in the story of "The Man Born to be King." This primitive Gothic world of older gods and more heroic men was less fully his own. In "The Roots of the Mountains," though the supposed date of the story can hardly be later than the seventh century, he tends to slip back now and then into the later romantic world, full of beautifully forged armour and grey carved stone, and gardens standing thick with pinks and lavender. But here all the sensuous ornament of mediæval romance is as strictly excluded as it is from the stories of Sigurd and of the dwellers in Laxdale. Even when the hero makes pictures for himself of some golden life that is to be when fighting is over, it is no such world of cloistered green places, "faint with the scent of the overworn roses and the honey-sweetness of the lilies," to which his dreams turn, but the hard open life of the earlier world. "There he was between the plough-stilts in the acres of the kindred when the west wind was blowing over the promise of early spring; or

smiting down the ripe wheat in the hot afternoon amidst the laughter and merry talk of man and maid; or far away over Mirkwood-water watching the edges of the wood against the prowling wolf and lynx, the stars just beginning to shine over his head; or wending the windless woods in the first frosts before the snow came, the hunter's bow or javelin in hand; or coming back from the wood with the quarry on the sledge across the snow, when winter was deep, through the biting icy wind and the whirl of the drifting snow, to the lights and music of the Great Roof, and the merry talk therein and the smiling of the faces glad to see the hunting-carles come back; and the full draughts of mead, and the sweet rest a night-tide when the north wind was moaning round the ancient home."

His first satisfaction in the appearance of the book was soon replaced by a keener desire to improve upon it. "I am very glad that you like the new book," he writes to Ellis a few days after it was published. "I quite agree with you about the type; they have managed to knock the guts out of it somehow. Also I am beginning to learn something about the art of type-setting; and I now see what a lot of difference there is between the work of the conceited numskulls of to-day and that of the 15th and 16th century printers merely in the arrangement of the words, I mean the spacing out: it makes all the difference in the beauty of a page of print. If ever I print another book I shall enter into the conflict on this side also. However this is all grief that comes of fresh knowledge and I am pretty well pleased with the book as to its personal appearance."

On the 10th of January he writes to his daughter:

"Dearest own Jenny,

"I came back yesterday from Hadham; Auntie was pretty well, and the Granny in very good spirits but very deaf. She went a walk with me to the Church in the morning: they are 'restoring' the nave; a wanton piece of stupidity, as there was really nothing to do with it. However there was no excuse for touching the roof, which is quite sound; so they left that alone: in short the only harm is the new plaister, and the new modern glass, but that is considerable. They have found one or two bits of painting, which they have left: one a good patch of that imitation of patterned stuff such as we know at Fairford and Burford, but not so elaborate; a rough bold good pattern. I went to see the Berrys with them; and thought the house very nice; it is really a 16th century building much faked up: but the rooms with that pleasantness of an old house: some of them with that regular old panelling in them where the mouldings are not 'mitred,' but the horizontal ones die off before they meet the vertical. I was there two nights and played backgammon both with Auntie and Granny: the latter beat me one night (to her great delight), but they, and especially Auntie, played with the utmost recklessness.

"This is a bad business of the burning of Clouds, isn't it? When I saw it (the year before last I think) it looked so solid that one could not think of its being destroyed. I was at the Grange this morning and Aunt Georgie read me a letter to Margaret from one of the daughters which gave a really good account of the scene. It was touch and go for some of them. I saw Webb yesterday, and he made light of it, as he would be likely to do. It seems it will be rebuilt,

which is a good thing; but there is a certain feeling of weariness in the proceeding, isn't there, dear? Webb says that some of the walls may be all right, especially as they are mostly built of sandstone, not limestone: the lower rooms, or some of them, were not burnt. The walls were 3 feet thick. One of Uncle Ned's cartoons that he did for the church in Rome was there and was burnt; but that is the only important unreplaceable thing I have heard of. Our long carpet was, I imagine, saved.

"The weather changed on Tuesday and yesterday, which was a bright beautiful day: but to-day is cold; rainy, sleety, but not frosty. I think I should care mighty little about it (in January) if I were at Kelmscott, but bad weather, especially fog, does make London wretched: indeed I feel very like not going out in it this evening; but I think I must, as it is a Ways and Means evening at the League.

"Well, darling Jenny, good-bye with this not very brilliant letter. By the way you will be glad to hear that Faulkner shows signs of mending. Good-bye, my dearest child.

"Your loving father,
"William Morris."

Charles Faulkner, the constant friend of so many years, had been struck down by paralysis in the previous October. He lingered in a state of living death for upwards of three years, with just so much intelligence left as allowed of his being amused a little by the company of his friends. Through all that period, his sister, Miss Kate Faulkner, was his devoted and unweariable nurse; and next to her, his old companions, Webb and Morris, were the most constant in their attention. Between Morris and Faulkner the

intimacy and affection was perhaps the stronger that it was founded on a deeper and subtler bond than community of tastes or even association in work. A fine mathematician and a man of high proficiency in the mixed mathematics of engineering, Faulkner had no native bent towards art, and no apparent creative power. He had, however, qualities at least as attaching: unconquerable courage, transparent honesty, and deep-rooted affection; and his devotion to Morris knew no limit. He had followed him into the Socialist League as he had followed him into the firm of Red Lion Square, and lectured on Socialism for him as he had painted tiles and cut wood-blocks five and twenty years earlier, with perfect simplicity and sincerity. The work and all the load of toil and obloquy it involved had almost been too much even for Morris's immense energy and abounding vitality: on the weaker constitution of Faulkner it would seem to have acted with dangerous and finally fatal result.

"The Roots of the Mountains" had been begun as soon as "The House of the Wolfings" was through the press. "Did I tell you in my last," he writes to his daughter on the 29th of January, "that I had begun a new tale? I don't know whether it will come to anything, but I have written about twenty pages in the rough. This time I don't think I shall 'drop into poetry,' at least not systematically. For one thing the condition of the people I am telling of is later (whatever their date may be) than that of the Wolfings. They are people living in a place near the Great Mountains. I don't think it is worth while telling you anything more of it till you hear some of it done, as the telling the plot of a story in cold blood falls very flat."

Though he still lectured regularly for the Socialist League, addresses on Art, principally given to the students of Art Schools, were taking a more and more prominent place in his activity. The way in which the two kinds of work were at present combined is well illustrated by a letter of this February. "I go to-morrow, Saturday," he writes from Hammersmith, "by night train to Glasgow, and lecture for the branch on Sunday evening. On the Monday I lecture to certain art students on Gothic Architecture, which I daresay will be rather a new subject to them, and will a good deal surprise them. On the Tuesday I give an address at the School of Art on Arts and Crafts. On Wednesday I go to Edinburgh and lecture for the branch there: on Thursday I go to Macclesfield and lecture (Arts and Crafts) to the School of Art there: Friday I come home, with pretty well enough of it."

On this visit to Glasgow, "I went," he says, "to Professor Nichol to guest: he is a 'literary man,' not with a wooden leg; but there is something crippled about his mind all the same; a very clever and able man, but soured and disappointed; mainly I think because his capacity is second- and his ambition first-rate. He is talkative and amusing, and was very cordial with me. That day I lectured on Gothic Architecture to an Institute of students. I am afraid that they did not know much about the subject, so that my matter was rather over their heads. Lecture over, I underwent a bore—to wit dining at a solemn dinner at the Arts Club: Lord Provost (*i.e.*, Mayor) present, also professors and big-wigs. The business of the evening to make speeches; toasts and thanks for them. *I* had to return thanks for Music and Literature, curious conjuncture! which I turned the flank of by alluding to the Scotch Ballads and their old tunes. Tuesday

I had to address the art-school after a sort of private public dinner; the place was full, although J. Chamberlain was speaking to a big meeting elsewhere, and the folk seemed pleased."

Through all the wear and tear of this work "The Roots of the Mountains" was making steady progress. At Kelmscott in March, "the rooks and the lambs both singing around me," he writes that "I have been writing out my rough copy of my story and have done a good deal of it. I am half inclined not to kill my Bride, but to make her marry the brother: it would be a very good alliance for the Burgdalers and the Silverdalers both, and I don't think sentiment ought to stand in the way."

On Easter Monday he writes again from Kelmscott to Mrs. Burne-Jones:

"As I have been away some time I will hereby bestow some of my tediousness on you. I only got here on Thursday and feel as if I had been staying here a long time; not that I have been bored with it, as I have enough to do what with my story, what with other work which I ought to do and don't. The country is about six weeks backward; more backward by a good deal than it was last year, though that was late: neither the big trees (except the chestnuts) nor the apple trees show any sign of life yet. The garden is very pretty, though there are scarce any flowers in blossom except the primroses; but there are such beautiful promises of buds and things just out of the ground that it makes amends for all. The buds of the wild tulip, which is one of the beautifullest flowers there is, just at point to open. Jenny and I went up into Buscot wood this morning: it is such a change from our river plain that it is like going into another country; yet I don't much care about a wood unless

it is a very big one; and Buscot is scarcely more than a coppice; but the blue distance between the trunks was very delightful. As to the weather, bearing in mind that things are so much behindhand, it is not bad. To-day has been March all over; rain-showers, hail, wind, dead calm, thunder, finishing with a calm frosty evening sky. The birds are amusing, especially the starlings, whereof there are many: but some damned fool has been bullying our rooks so much that they have only got six nests, so that we haven't got the proper volume of sound from them.

"One grief, the sort of thing that is alway happening in the spring: there were some beautiful willows at Eaton Hastings which to my certain knowledge had not been polled during the whole 17 years that we have been here; and now the idiot Parson has polled them into wretched stumps. I should like to cut off the beggar's legs and have wooden ones made for him out of the willow timber, the value of which is about *7s. 6d.*

"I am so very sorry to hear of poor Kate's misfortune, and am not a little uneasy about it. I didn't see her last Wednesday, though I called. She was poorly then, having had some bad nights with poor dear Charley. It is such a grievous business altogether that, rightly or wrongly, I try not to think of it too much lest I should give way altogether, and make an end of what small use there may be in my life."

The following beautiful description of a visit to western Wiltshire on business of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings is also from a letter to Mrs. Burne-Jones written on the 13th of May:

"Thursday afternoon was grey and stormy: the lightning twinkled over the White Horse as we passed

by, and just at Swindon down came the rain in floods. However I had rather a pleasant journey to Westbury, as the rain didn't last long, and every field corner was lovely. Some way off I saw the downs rise mountainous above the town, and remembered them by token of a modern White Horse which somewhat spoils the lovely headland they push into the plain. The town is little and, as I expected, dull, dull, dull: no old houses, a great big church much spoiled by restoration, and my dull, but not ugly inn close to it. I got in about seven, so had a longish time before bed, which I partly got rid of by going a little way up the down after my dinner: so you see gout was not rampant. The resources of the Lopes Arms were not great; but they (with all civility) provided me for breakfast with what to me has been of late a rarity; to wit, a genuine addled egg. However their hearts were in the right places if their eggs were not. Next morning I drove to Edington along the feet of the Downs, which are very fine: also the villages push up right into their buttresses with cottages and trees, so that it is lovely; the building being tolerable: so came I to Edington, which was like one of my dream-churches, so big and splendid: the whole population of Edington and its two neighbours could easily go to church in one of its transepts. Beside it a beautiful little fifteenth-century house with pretty garden, and beyond, the Abbey gardens and fish-ponds and a village green on the other side: except that the parson is a lubber-fiend and that the people are as poor as may be, nothing need be better. So back to Westbury, and in early afternoon to Bradford. Quite a pretty town and as gay as gay; away from the downs in a steep little valley built all up the southern-looking slope; all up and down with steps and queer nooks: of

stone every house, most of them old, a good many mediæval. The bridge fifteenth century, with a queer little toll-house on it. The church a very big and fine one, but scraped to death by G. Scott, the (happily) dead dog. Close by, the Saxon chapel, a very beautiful little building, but shamefully vulgarized by restoration, cast iron railings, and sixpence a head. Out in the meadow, awkwardly near the Railway Station, Barton Farm with old house and farm buildings, the big fourteenth-century barn one of them. It is very fine, but I think Great Coxwell is bigger, and I like it better."

At Kelmscott again on Midsummer day "haymaking is going on like a house afire; I should think such a haytime has seldom been; heavy crop and wonderful weather to get it in. For the rest the country is one big nosegay, the scents wonderful, really that is the word; the life to us holiday-makers luxurious to the extent of making one feel wicked, at least in the old sense of bewitched.

"We went to Great Coxwell yesterday, and also to Little Coxwell, where there is a funny little church with a 14th-century wooden roof over the nave, the church much smaller than Kelmscott. We were delighted with the barn again. The farmer turned up and seemed a nice sort of chap; he said his family had been there for hundreds of years. William Morris was, it seems, lord of the manor there: we saw his brass again, it is really a very pretty one. The harvest being now out of the barn, we saw the corbels that support the wall pieces: they are certainly not later than 1250, so the barn is much earlier than I thought. The building of the walls and buttresses is remarkably good and solid.

"The roses are not at their best, yet I shall bring

you a good bunch. The pink martagon lilies have been very fine. Raspberries any amount, but none to eat for a fortnight at least: no strawberries yet."

In July Morris was one of the English delegates to an international Congress of Socialists held in Paris to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. The proceedings there did not re-inspire him with confidence in the prospects of the cause or the wisdom of its leaders. He left Paris before the sittings of the Congress were concluded, and so escaped the final scenes of confused recrimination among the various sects which ended in the violent expulsion of the dissentient minority. The great London dock strike of the following August and September was hailed by him with a greater hope: for here at least there was an instance of labour organizing itself for a definite end, and being supported in the struggle by a powerful minority, if not an actual preponderance, of educated opinion. The end in question was indeed a particular one, yet it involved issues of immense width. Almost for the first time in the social history of England the organized trades took their part definitely on the side of unskilled and unorganized labour, and the principle of a minimum payment for human work began to emerge. The "docker's tanner" of 1889 was the germ more fully developed in the famous "living wage" of 1893.

Morris was at Kelmscott when the strike began; but on returning to London he at once realized its importance. "I went straight to the League," he writes on the 31st of August, "and found our people there in a great state of excitement about the strike, the importance of which I had not at all understood in the country: only you see we are two days late for news at Kelmscott. However I thought that perhaps

our folk a little exaggerated the importance of it, as to some of them it seemed that now at last the revolution was beginning. Whereas indeed it began before the Mammoth ended, and is now only going on. Yet I don't want to belittle the strike, which *is* of much importance, chiefly as showing such a good spirit on the part of the men. They will, I fear, be beaten; and perhaps their yesterday's manifesto will not do them good as mere strikers. On the other hand it was a step which they were sure to take, if the masters held out; as in spite of the assertions of the daily press the tendency has been Socialistic; and I am very glad that they have taken it, since as aforesaid the real point of the strike is the sense of combination which it is giving to the men, and their winning or losing matters little, especially as what they ask for is so small. That the capitalistic press should turn against them for the said manifesto, is a matter of course, so after this hint at a general strike (it can be no more than a hint) it is clear that there is a feeling abroad wider than a mere attack on these muddling dock directors. I am told, and believe it, that the attack is on sweating in general. Our people have been very active; the Hammersmith branch alone having collected (mostly on Sunday and Monday last) nearly £20; a large sum for Socialists to handle."

"I went on Wednesday to Yarmouth," says a letter of the same date, "and had many thoughts of Peggotty. It really is a jolly old ramshackle place: the country about curious and fascinating: sand banks very low, all covered with heather and ling and bracken, so that if you were lying there you would expect to see highland crags above you; instead of which, two feet below spread out miles upon miles of

alluvial meadows with slow rivers running through them, as you judge by the great sails moving over the pastures. The great church has been woefully restored, indeed almost ruined outside; I believe by John Seddon: but inside there is a good deal to see: a huge spacious church without any clerestory anywhere; exhilarating to behold after the modern shabbiness."

The Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society held a second exhibition at the New Gallery in autumn, of which a selection of Morris's woven stuffs and printed cottons was a prominent feature. To the catalogue he contributed a charming and luminous essay on the art of dyeing; and he opened the series of lectures given in the rooms of the exhibition by an introductory address on Gothic Architecture, which expressed within brief compass and in simple words the whole knowledge and enthusiasm of a lifetime.

He was also one of the leading speakers at an Art Congress held in Edinburgh in November, which was only conspicuous for a curious attempt, made by a section of its promoters, to capture it for Socialism after having sacrificed to decorum by meeting under the presidency of the Marquis of Lorne. Before he went, Morris frankly called his journey a fool's errand. When it was finished he wrote home: "It was rather a dull job, and imagine one in the chair hour after hour listening to men teaching their grandmother to suck eggs, and I on my good behaviour too! I am very tired of it; but since the Tory evening paper here declares that Crane and I have spoiled the Congress, you may imagine we have not let all go by default. In point of fact, with the exception of Richmond, who gave a good address yesterday, there was nothing of any interest said except by Crane and me; and my

lecture on dyeing to the workmen was really a success." This lecture was one of a series given to working men by experts on the principles and practice of their crafts. The others were given by Mr. Crane, Mr. Emery Walker, and Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, all of them either declared Socialists or in full sympathy with Socialism. "On the whole the working men were good and attentive," Morris says, "and stood our Socialism well, in fact seemed to relish it."

"I have finished my book (last night)," he writes to Kelmscott on the 10th of October, "and there will not be many more proofs I think. I have a mind to begin a short story again soon; but shall say no more about it till it is under way. I have been to Oxford Street and Merton, and find business good: the girls were hard at work on the yellow carpet, but had not done very much to it yet. I was busy at pointing all the day. The tapestry is going on well, though not very fast. We have sold the 'Peace' exhibited at the Arts and Crafts for £160, which I am glad of. As for the Exhibition, I think it will be a success: the rooms look very pretty; and there are a good many interesting works there. The visitors come pretty well: these first three days they have taken more than double than they did in the same time last year; so this looks good."

"The Roots of the Mountains" was published in the middle of November. The study of typography as a fine art, which had been begun in "The House of the Wolfings," was here carried out much more fully, and the result was a page of great beauty. "I am so pleased with my book," Morris said soon after it was published, "—typography, binding, and must I say it, literary matter—that I am any day to be seen huggling it up, and am become a spectacle to Gods

and men because of it." As to the "literary matter," he said afterwards that this of all his books was the one which had given him the greatest pleasure in writing. For combination and balance of his qualities it may perhaps be ranked first among his prose romances. It has not the strength of its predecessor, "The House of the Wolfings," nor the fairy charm of its successor, "The Wood beyond the World." But in its union of the gravity of the Saga with the delicate and profuse ornament of the romance it may perhaps take the first place among the three as a work of art.

The binding which pleased him so much was one of his own chintzes, used for a small number of copies of the book printed on hand-made paper. His own cooler judgment recognized that it had defects for this use both in pattern and texture, and the experiment was not repeated. But his interest in the production of printed books was now fully aroused on all its sides; and he was already beginning to plan out the printing and production of such books himself.

"I think before my next book comes out," he wrote to Ellis on the 21st of November, "I shall design a chintz for bookbinding, and if I do I shall get it calendered so as to keep the dirt off—what do you think? As to the printing, the difficulty of getting it really well done shows us the old story again. It seems it is no easy matter to get good hand-press men, so little work is done by the hand-press: that accounts for some defects in the book, caused by want of care in distributing the ink. I really am thinking of turning printer myself in a small way; the first step to that would be getting a new fount cut. Walker and I both think Jenson's the best model, taking all things into consideration. What do you think again? Did you

ever have his Pliny? I have a vivid recollection of the vellum copy at the Bodleian."

Such was the first inception of the Kelmscott Press. In December Mr. Emery Walker was asked by Morris to go into partnership with him as a printer. He was unable to accept the offer; but the starting of a printing press was nevertheless definitely resolved on, and the latest great interest of Morris's life begins from this point.

The last letter of the year is as follows:

"Kelmscott House,
"Dec. 24th, 1889.

"Dearest Mother,

"Thank you very much for your kind letter, and for sending me the paper knife. We are all well; and as for me I rather like the weather for winter-weather. Yesterday morning was indeed beautiful, and Jenny went with a friend to the Chiswick Horticultural Gardens, which are still in existence though sadly built up. I remember as clearly as if it were yesterday going with father there when I was quite a little boy, and have never been inside the place since. How the neighbourhood must have altered since then! Indeed it has altered very much, and that for the worse, since we first came to Turnham Green.

"I have been so very busy lately with the work at Oxford Street and Merton, that I have had no time to turn round, or I should have come down and seen you. I will do so shortly after Christmas. Janey and I remembered that you liked that champagne which I sent you last year, and I'm sure it will do you good to drink a glass now and then; so we are sending you a little more, which ought to reach you before the New Year. I hope you will like it, dearest Mother.

"I shall be writing to Henrietta as well as you, but give her my best love, which I send her, and to you, my dearest mother, my best of love and good wishes.

"The paper knife has not come yet or I would tell you what I think of it.

"Good-bye, dearest Mother.

"Your most affectionate son,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

CHAPTER XIX

PASSIVE SOCIALISM: FOUNDATION OF THE KELMSCOTT PRESS

1890-1891

WHILE Morris's attention was becoming absorbed in other fields, the affairs of the Socialist League had been going on from bad to worse. Such part of their doctrines as was of essential truth or immediate practical value had been absorbed by, and was bearing fruit among, the larger body of persons who were interested in social theories, but more concerned about what was immediately possible than in dreams, however high or however bloodthirsty. The real battle-ground had been transferred to the Independent Labour Party, and, in the metropolis, the recently created London County Council. To these bodies a number of the best members of the League now transferred their energies. The remnant became more and more a group of impracticable visionaries whom the movement of things had left behind. In 1889 the control of the executive was captured by a group of professed Anarchists. One of their first acts was to depose Morris from the control of the Commonweal, replacing him by an extremist named Frank Kitz. "The League," says one of its members, "became a romping ground of more than

dubious characters"—he gives names which I forbear to quote—"who, being suspected of relations with the police, drove the better elements away in disgust, and finally broke up what was left of Morris's organization." With infinite patience, Morris continued for some time yet to bear the demands made on his purse to meet the expenses of the Commonweal; and it was after his removal from the editorship that he contributed to it, from the 11th of January to the 4th of October, 1890, the successive chapters of his romance, "News from Nowhere." In the issues of July and August there was also printed in numbers a lecture by him on the Development of Modern Society. On the 12th of May he reappeared on the stage in support of the fast sinking funds of the journal, taking a part in a one-act play, "The Duchess of Bayswater and Co.," which was performed by members of the League in a hall in Tottenham Court Road. This was one of the last desperate efforts made to restore the League to solvency. Though the Commonweal never followed the example of a sister journal conducted by Communists and Anarchists at Buenos Ayres, for which any payment was purely voluntary, the number of copies sold was dwindling away almost to nothing, and the appeals repeated in nearly every number for renewal of lapsed subscriptions had little effect. As the task of keeping the League together became more impracticable, the interest taken in it by Morris, as a thoroughly practical man of business notwithstanding all his high idealism, also fell away. In July he writes, "I have been somewhat worried by matters connected with the League, and am like to be more worried; but somehow or other I don't seem to care much." Vague efforts were made from time to time to promote union with other Socialist bodies, but they were futile. The disinte-

grating forces were too strong to be stopped. The doctrine of freedom from dictation was worked out in the quaintest ways. At a Revolutionary Conference held in August "it was unanimously agreed"—so the official record runs—"to dispense with any such quasi-constitutional official as a chairman, and all red-tapeism and quasi-authoritarianism were banished." At the same time articles began to appear in the Commonweal gravely discussing the methods or putting up barricades in London streets.

Morris had learned his lesson. "Such finish to what of education in practical Socialism I am capable of," he wrote a few years later with a touch of acid humour, "I received from some of my Anarchist friends, from whom I learned, quite against their intention, that Anarchism was impossible, much as I had learned from Mill, against *his* intention, that Socialism was necessary." But before severing his connexion with the League, Morris made a final statement and appeal. It appeared in the Commonweal for the 15th of November, 1890, and summed up his attitude towards the cause which he had, in spite of all disillusionments, as deeply as ever at heart. He reviews the strange history of the movement with calmness and not without a certain pride.

"It is now some seven years," he writes, "since Socialism came to life again in this country. To some the time will seem long, so many hopes and disappointments as have been crowded into them. Yet in the history of a serious movement seven years is a short time enough; and few movements surely have made so much progress during this short time in one way or another as Socialism has done.

"For what was it which we set out to accomplish? To change the system of society on which the tremend-

ous fabric of civilization is founded, and which has been built up by centuries of conflict with older and dying systems, and crowned by the victory of modern civilization over the material surroundings of life. Could seven years make any visible impression on such a tremendous undertaking as this?

"Consider, too, the quality of those who began and carried on this business of reversing the basis of modern society! A few working men, less successful even in the wretched life of labour than their fellows; a sprinkling of the intellectual proletariat, whose keen pushing of Socialism must have seemed pretty certain to extinguish their limited chances of prosperity; one or two outsiders in the game political; a few refugees from the bureaucratic tyranny of foreign Governments; and here and there an unpractical, half-cracked artist or author.

"Yet such as they were, they were enough to do something. Through them, though not by them, the seven years of the new movement toward freedom have, contrary to all that might have been expected, impressed the idea of Socialism deeply on the epoch.

"It cannot be said that great unexpected talent for administration and conduct of affairs has been developed amongst us, nor any vast amount of foresight either. We have been what we seemed to be (to our friends I hope)—and that was no great things. We have between us made about as many mistakes as any other party in a similar space of time. Quarrels more than enough we have had; and sometimes also weak assent for fear of quarrels to what we did not agree with. There has been self-seeking amongst us, and vainglory, and sloth, and rashness; though there has been at least courage and devotion also. When I first joined the movement I hoped that some working-

man leader, or rather leaders, would turn up, who would push aside all middle-class help, and become great historical figures. I might still hope for that, if it seemed likely to happen, for indeed I long for it enough; but to speak plainly it does not seem so at present. Yet, I repeat, in spite of all drawbacks the impression has been made, and why? The reason has been given in words said before, but which I must needs say again: because that seemingly inexpugnable fabric of modern society is verging towards its fall; it has done its work, and is going to change into something else.

"So much at least we have to encourage us. But are not some of us disappointed in spite of the change of the way in which Socialism is looked on generally? It is but natural that we should be. When we first began to work together, there was little said about anything save the great ideals of Socialism; and so far off did we seem from the realization of these, that we could hardly think of any means for their realization, save great dramatic events which would make our lives tragic indeed, but would take us out of the sordidness of the so-called 'peace' of civilization. With the great extension of Socialism, this also is changed. Our very success has dimmed the great ideals that first led us on; for the hope of the partial and, so to say, vulgarized realization of Socialism is now pressing on us. I think that we are all confident that Socialism will be realized: it is not wonderful, then, that we should long to see—to feel—its realization in our own lifetime. Methods of realization, therefore, are now more before our eyes than ideals: but it is of no use talking about methods which are not, in part at least, immediately feasible, and it is of the nature of such partial methods to be

sordid and discouraging, though they *may* be necessary.

"There are two tendencies in this matter of methods: on the one hand is our old acquaintance palliation, elevated now into vastly greater importance than it used to have, because of the growing discontent, and the obvious advance of Socialism; on the other is the method of partial, necessarily futile, inconsequent revolt, or riot rather, against the authorities, who are our absolute masters, and can easily put it down.

"With both of these methods I disagree; and that the more because the palliatives have to be clamoured for, and the riots carried out, by men who do not know what Socialism is, and have no idea what their next step is to be, if contrary to all calculation they should happen to be successful. Therefore, at the best our masters would be our masters still, because there would be nothing to take their place. *We are not ready for such a change as that!*

"I have mentioned the two lines on which what I should call the methods of impatience profess to work. Before I write a very few words on the only line of method on which some of us *can* work, I will give my views about the present state of the movement as briefly as I can.

"The whole set opinion amongst those more or less touched by Socialism, who are not definite Socialists, is towards the New Trades' Unionism and palliation. Men believe that they can wrest from the capitalists some portion of their privileged profits, and the masters, to judge by the recent threats of combination on their side, believe also that this can be done. That it could only very partially be done, and

that the men could not rest there if it were done, we Socialists know very well; but others do not.

"I neither believe in State Socialism as desirable in itself, nor, indeed, as a complete scheme do I think it possible. Nevertheless, some approach to it is sure to be tried, and to my mind this will precede any complete enlightenment on the new order of things. The success of Mr. Bellamy's utopian book, deadly dull as it is, is a straw to show which way the wind blows. The general attention paid to our clever friends, the Fabian lecturers and pamphleteers, is not altogether due to their literary ability; people have really got their heads turned more or less in their direction.

"Now it seems to me that at such a time, when people are not only discontented, but have really conceived a hope of bettering the condition of labour, while at the same time the means towards their end are doubtful; or, rather, when they take the very beginning of the means as an end in itself,—that this time when people are excited about Socialism, and when many who know nothing about it think themselves Socialists, is the time of all others to put forward the simple principles of Socialism regardless of the policy of the passing hour.

"My readers will understand that in saying this I am speaking for those who are complete Socialists—or let us call them Communists. I say for us *to make Socialists* is *the* business at present, and at present I do not think we can have any other useful business. Those who are not really Socialists—who are Trades' Unionists, disturbance-breeders, or what not—will do what they are impelled to do, and we cannot help it. At the worst there will be some good in what they do; but we need not and cannot heartily

work with them, when we know that their methods are beside the right way.

"Our business, I repeat, is the making of Socialists, *i.e.*, convincing people that Socialism is good for them and is possible. When we have enough people of that way of thinking, *they* will find out what action is necessary for putting their principles in practice. Therefore, I say, make Socialists. We Socialists can do nothing else that is useful."

This grave and reasoned statement drew forth a volley of shrill protest and abuse from the Anarchists of the League. "Our comrade lectures us!" one of them writes indignantly in the next number of the journal; and another replies by a frantic appeal to use dynamite and make open war upon society. But Morris had already left the League. The moment he did so it began to crumble away like sand. The offices of the League in Farringdon Road had been already given up for a year, and the Commonweal had been issued from small premises in Great Queen Street. Now the rent was not forthcoming for these; they were in their turn vacated, and for the remainder of its brief and restless life the Commonweal was issued from a temporary address in Lamb's Conduit Street, where some of the members of the League kept a small grocery store under the sounding name of the Socialist Co-operative Federation. The weekly issue of the Commonweal at once ceased. It continued a struggling life as a monthly for upwards of a year. Its preaching became more and more violent. At last the slow-moving arm of authority came down upon it. In April, 1892, certain men describing themselves as Anarchists had been arrested and tried as Walsall on the charge of manufacturing high-explosive bombs; and four of them were sentenced to

long terms of penal servitude. A violent article appeared in the next issue of the Commonweal, declaiming against the Home Secretary, the Judge, and the Inspector of Police who had conducted the case, and asking if such men were fit to live. The authorities were weary of this perpetual recurrence of what was on the face of it incitement to murder, and determined to make an end of it once for all. C. W. Mowbray and D. J. Nicoll, the former registered as printer and publisher, the latter as proprietor, of the Commonweal, were arrested a few days later. When tried on the criminal charge, Mowbray, who asserted that he had disapproved of the particular article in question, and was able to prove that he had taken no active part in the publication of the Commonweal for two or three months back, was acquitted; Nicoll was convicted and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment. This was the end of the Commonweal, and with it of the last remnants of the Socialist League.

By that time Morris was too busy with other things to be deeply concerned; nor had the treatment he had received from his unfortunate colleagues been such as a patience not absolutely inexhaustible could survive. One allusion to the matter is preserved in his correspondence. Writing to his daughter on the 21st of April, 1892, "You will be sorry to see," he says, "that Nicoll and Mowbray, two of our old comrades, have got into trouble with the Commonweal. It was very stupid of Nicoll, for it seems that he stuck in his idiotic article while Mowbray was away, so that the latter knew nothing of it. I think Mowbray will get off. I am sorry for him, and even for the Commonweal."

While therefore Morris's withdrawal in November

1890, from the membership of the Socialist League by no means meant that he had ceased to be a convinced Socialist or had in any important way modified his doctrine, it did imply an important change in the conduct of his own life. The weary work of militant Socialism was now over for him. To make Socialists, mainly by the quiet influence of ideas; to keep the flame alive till the slow advance of time and thought had prepared the fuel for it, remained still what he conceived of as his duty; but this was rather a way of living and thinking than an active struggle, an expenditure of time and money, or that expense of spirit which was even a heavier and a more wasteful drain. A small body of his own immediate circle, those connected with him by friendship or neighbourhood, had hitherto been organized as the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League. They now seceded along with him, and formed themselves into an independent body named the Hammersmith Socialist Society. The secession was resolved upon on the 21st of November. Two days afterwards they met, to the number of about a dozen, and organized themselves under a very simple body of rules. The circular, drafted by Morris, which they sent out to the other branches of the Socialist League in England and Scotland—by this time their number had dwindled to ten, four in London and six in the provinces—is studiously quiet in its wording.

"We think it proper," he wrote, "to write you a brief explanation of the action which the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League has thought it necessary to take in separating itself from the League.

"It has been impossible for us to be blind to the fact that there have been once more growing up two parties in the League, one of which has been tending

more and more to Anarchism, and the other has been opposed to that tendency; the paper of the League, the Commonweal, has, by a vote of the last Conference, been put into the hands of those who represent the Anarchist views: and the majority of the Council are of that way of thinking. Several articles have appeared in the Commonweal with the approbation of the majority of the Council, which we have felt did not represent our opinions. Under these circumstances there were two courses for us to pursue; first to remain in the League, and oppose whatever seriously thwarted our views, and secondly to withdraw from it and carry on our propaganda independently. We have chosen the second course; because we believe in the sincerity of our comrades with whom we disagree; and we think that however much they might be disposed to yield to us and to keep articles which we should not approve of out of the paper, they could not do so without looking upon us as a drag upon their freedom of speech and action. And moreover a great part of our time which should be spent in attacking capitalism would have to be wasted in bickering with our own comrades. Therefore we think it much better to retire in a friendly way, keeping our own freedom and not interfering with that of others, and thus have formally withdrawn ourselves from the League.

"We have reconstituted ourselves under the name of the Hammersmith Socialist Society, and hope and believe that our efforts in pushing forward Socialism will be rather stimulated than retarded by the new position that we have been forced into, and that we shall take every opportunity, whenever we feel ourselves able to do so, of acting cordially with all bodies of Socialists both in and out of the Socialist League."

The conditions of membership in the Society were limited to a general agreement with the principles of Socialism, as explained in the manifesto to be issued by it, and a payment of a shilling as annual subscription. Its object was defined, or was left undefined, as the spreading of the principles of Socialism. Its place of meeting was named as being at Kelmscott House, and a few simple regulations as to officers and candidates made up the remainder of its constitution. Mr. E. Walker was, and still is, the secretary of the Society. Morris himself was treasurer. The old room in Kelmscott House continued to be at the service of the members for meetings, which were held twice a week for several years. As time went on they became more intermittent; and at last the Society continued to exist only in the sense that it never was formally dissolved.

"I have got to rewrite the manifesto for the new Hammersmith Society," Morris writes on the 9th of December, 1890, "and that I must do this very night: it is a troublesome and difficult job, and I had so much rather go on with my Saga work."

The manifesto does not throw any fresh light on his principles or methods. It is in the main a re-statement of the case against a capitalist system of society; to which a further definition of the aims of the newly-founded body is added, disclaiming State Socialism as a final ideal, but repudiating with much greater energy any doctrine which tends towards Anarchism. "It is not the dissolution of society for which we strive, but its re-integration. The idea put forward by some who attack present society, of the complete independence of every individual, that is, of freedom without society, is not merely impossible of realization, but when looked into, turns out to be inconceivable."

Passive resistance is proclaimed as the limit of opposition to the existing order, however tyrannical; and the hope of the future is indicated as a general combination of labour which will slowly drive capitalists from position after position, until at last they find themselves in possession of responsibility without privilege, and voluntarily abdicate an untenable position.

Throughout the year the project of his new printing press and the work to be done in connexion with it had swallowed up all other interests. Even his own work in romance-writing and translating Sagas from the Icelandic took a second place to it. But at these employments, and at his Merton Abbey work, he was also fairly busy, and well contented with them all. In February the magnificent Arras tapestry of the Adoration of the Kings which now hangs in Exeter College Chapel was finished to his complete satisfaction; nothing better of the kind, he said, had ever been done, old or new. The admission to partnership in the firm of Morris & Co. of Messrs. F. and R. Smith, the two principal sub-managers after Mr. George Wardle's retirement, had relieved Morris from a great deal of the purely mechanical or commercial details of management. The romance entitled "The Story of the Glittering Plain" was written this spring, and was published in the English Illustrated Magazine, in the four numbers for the months of June to September. It is perhaps best known as the first book printed at the Kelmscott Press. But it is likewise notable as marking the full and unreserved return of the author to romance. In "The House of the Wolfings," and even to some degree in "The Roots of the Mountains" also, there had been a semi-historical setting, and an adherence to the conditions of a world from which the

supernatural element was not indeed excluded, but in which it bore such a subordinate place as involved no violent strain on probability. Here the imagined world is of no place or time, and is one in which nothing is impossible. The dreamer of dreams has returned to that strange Land East of the Sun, mingled of Northern Saga and Arabian tale, through which the Star-Gazer had passed two and twenty years before in the days of "The Earthly Paradise": a land in which, like Odysseus and his comrades in the isle of Circe, "we do not know where is the dusk nor where the dawn." The book which the King's daughter shows to Hallblithe in his dream on the Acre of the Undying is a sort of figure of that glittering world, rich with all imagined and unimaginable wonders, into which Morris had entered long ago, and the door of which always remained open to him.

"She had in her hand a book covered outside with gold and gems, even as he saw it in the orchard-close aforetime: and he beheld her face that it was no longer the face of one sick with sorrow; but glad, and clear, and most beauteous. Now she opened the book and held it before Hallblithe and turned the leaves so that he might see them clearly; and therein were woods and castles painted, and burning mountains, and the wall of the world, and kings upon their thrones, and fair women and warriors, all most lovely to behold, even as he had seen it aforetime in the orchard when he lay lurking amidst the leaves of the bay tree.

"So at last she came to the place in the book wherein was painted Hallblithe's own image over against the image of the Hostage; and he looked thereon and longed. But she turned the leaf, and lo! on one side the Hostage again, standing in a fair garden of the spring with the lilies all about her feet, and behind

her the walls of a house, grey, ancient, and lovely: and on the other leaf over against her was painted a sea rippled by a little wind and a boat thereon sailing swiftly, and one man alone in the boat sitting and steering with a cheerful countenance; and he, who but Hallblithe himself. Hallblithe looked thereon for a while and then the King's daughter shut the book, and the dream flowed into other imaginings of no import."

"News from Nowhere," had been revised about the same time and was published as a cheap volume in paper covers, which had a large circulation. It is a curious fact that this slightly constructed and essentially insular romance has, as a Socialist pamphlet, been translated into French, German, and Italian, and has probably been more read in foreign countries than any of his more important works in prose or verse. The romance itself—if it would not be more correct to speak of it as a pastoral—is of such beauty as may readily win indulgence for its artificiality. A pastoral, whether it places its golden age in the past or the future, is by the nature of the case artificial, and perhaps as much so, though not so obviously, as when it boldly plants itself in the present. The immediate occasion which led Morris to put into a connected form those dreams of an idyllic future in which his mind was constantly hovering was no doubt the prodigious vogue which had been obtained the year before, by an American Utopia, Mr. Bellamy's once celebrated "Looking Backward." The refined rusticity of "News from Nowhere" is in studied contrast to the apotheosis of machinery and the glorification of the life of large towns in the American book; and is perhaps somewhat exaggerated in its reaction from that picture of a world in which the *phalanstère* of Fourier seems to have

swollen to delirious proportions, and State Socialism has resulted in a monstrous and almost incredible centralization.

Indeed a merely materialist Earthly Paradise was always a thing Morris regarded with a feeling little removed from disgust. That ideal organization of life in which the names of rich and poor should disappear, together with the things themselves, in a common social well-being, was in itself to him a mere body, of which art, as the single high source of pleasure, was the informing soul. "Mr. Bellamy worries himself unnecessarily," he had said in an article in the Commonweal on this very book and its ideas in June, 1889, "in seeking, with obvious failure, some incentive to labour to replace the fear of starvation, which is at present our only one; whereas it cannot be too often repeated that the true incentive to useful and happy labour is, and must be, pleasure in the work itself." That single sentence contains the sum of his belief in politics, in economics, in art.

The thought is thus expanded in the same article. "It is necessary to point out," he writes, "that there are some Socialists who do not think that the problem of the organization of life and necessary labour can be dealt with by a huge national centralization, working by a kind of magic for which no one feels himself responsible. that on the contrary it will be necessary for the unit of administration to be small enough for every citizen to feel himself responsible for its details and be interested in them; that individual men cannot shuffle off the business of life on to the shoulders of an abstraction called the State, but must deal with it in conscious association with each other: that variety of life is as much an aim of true Communism as equality of condition, and that nothing but an union of these

two will bring about real freedom: that modern nationalities are mere artificial devices for the commercial war that we seek to put an end to, and will disappear with it: and finally, that art, using that word in its widest and due signification, is not a mere adjunct of life which free and happy men can do without, but the necessary expression and indispensable instrument of human happiness."

On the 10th of June Morris writes from Kelmscott House to Mrs. Burne-Jones:

"I have had three outings,—no, four—two of them business though. Item to Chislehurst after a job: villas (some desperately ugly, others according to the new light) in the beautiful woods with lots of oak growing in them which to me is a treat, as I see so little oak about Kelmscott. Yes, villas and nothing but villas save a chemist's shop and a dry public house near the station: no sign of any common people, or anything but gentlemen and servants—a beastly place to live in, don't you think?

"Next place was better—in a way—a house of a very rich—and such a wretched uncomfortable place! a sham Gothic house of fifty years ago now being added to by a young architect of the commercial type—men who are very bad. Fancy, in one of the rooms there was not a pane of glass that opened! Well, let that flea stick on the wall. Stanmore is the name of the place: it is really quite pretty about, though only about ten miles from London (near Harrow), great big properties all about, the wall of one park next to the wall of another, which has at any rate preserved the trees. Smith and I walked thence to Edgware over most beautiful meadows with scarce a house to be seen till you come to Edgware, which is a little melancholy town or large village; old, not

ugly, but too visibly the home of most abundant poverty.

"The next outing was an Anti-Scrape one to Lincoln. That was exceedingly delightful to me. The town has a terrible blot on it, a great factory for machines down by the river, which seems to take a pleasure in smoking; indeed I suppose its masters are practically the masters of the whole town. However that is the worst of it: there is a longish oldish street on the flat, and at the end of it a beautiful gate across, now the Guildhall, and it rises steeper and steeper till before you come to the close you almost have to crawl, and most of the way the long leaden roof of the minster is the horizon; the houses mostly oldish red brick and pantiles. There is another most beautiful gate into the close, over which show the different planes of the minster most wonderfully. The whole place is chock full of history: there is work of the first Norman bishop, Remigius, who strangely enough moved his see there from Dorchester on the Thames, so well known to me. The rest (and almost all) is in gradated periods of Early Pointed; outside one may perhaps find fault with parts, especially the East Front (only I had a pleasing feeling that I was not responsible for them). But when we got inside all criticism fell, and one felt—well, quite happy—and as if one never wanted to go away again. I had seen it all more than twenty years ago, but somehow was much more impressed this time: the church is not high inside, though it is long and broad, but its great quality is a kind of careful delicacy of beauty, that no other English minster that I have seen comes up to: in short a miracle of art, that nowhere misses its intention. There is a little stained glass (early thirteenth century) as good as the best, and some of

the sculpture at least belongs to the best work of the time. Outside the church and close to it is a huge Norman Castle, the *enceinte* quite complete, a piece of the keep left: a horrible modern prison and court house inside the old walls. Five minutes from the close gate towards the open country you come on the gate of the Roman town, quite unornamented, but sound and well-built. Down the slope of the hill are still left two twelfth-century houses. One of them, in honour surely of little Sir Hugh, is called the Jew's House; I cheapened an old chest there of a lady somewhat of Mrs. Wilfer's type, who received us with the dignity of a fallen Queen."

The fourth outing was a brief visit to Kelmscott. "I am steadily at work," he writes ten days later, "reading my own poems, because we are really going to bring out a one-volume 'Earthly Paradise' this autumn. Some people would say the work was hard. 'The Glittering Plain' I have finished some time, and begun another."

On the 8th of July he writes again: "I have undertaken to get out some of the Sagas I have lying about. Quaritch is exceedingly anxious to get hold of me, and received with enthusiasm a proposal to publish a Saga Library: item he will give me money (or perhaps I ought to say old books). We have got six letters of our new type done and have even had a scrap printed."

This type, the first produced for the Kelmscott Press, cost Morris almost infinite pains. "What I wanted," he writes of it himself in the Note on his aims in founding the Kelmscott Press, "was letter pure in form; severe, without needless excrescences; solid, without the thickening and thinning of the line which is the essential fault of the ordinary modern type, and

which makes it difficult to read; and not compressed laterally, as all later type has grown to be owing to commercial exigencies. There was only one source from which to take examples of this perfected Roman type, to wit, the works of the great Venetian printers of the fifteenth century, of whom Nicholas Jenson produced the completest and most Roman characters from 1470 to 1476. This type I studied with much care, getting it photographed to a big scale, and drawing it over many times before I began designing my own letter; so that though I think I mastered the essence of it, I did not copy it servilely; in fact, my Roman type, especially in the lower case, tends rather more to the Gothic than does Jenson's."

By the middle of August eleven punches had been cut for the new fount, and Morris had determined that Caxton's "Golden Legend" should be the first large work produced by his press. He himself had recently acquired a copy of the edition of 1527 printed by Wynkyn de Worde. The Kelmscott "Golden Legend" was, however, set up, not from this, but from Caxton's own first edition of 1483. The almost priceless original was borrowed, under a heavy bond in case of loss or injury, from the Cambridge University Library for this purpose. It was transcribed for the press—a work of such laborious magnitude, and one executed so patiently and carefully as to deserve commemoration—by Miss Phillis M. Ellis, the daughter of his old friend and collaborator. Ellis himself took the chief part in superintending the accuracy of the text, a work of no small difficulty.

On the 29th of August, 1890, Morris writes to him from Kelmscott:

"Please pardon me for not answering your letter sooner; you know my little ways. Also I did want

to weigh between the Golden Legend and the Troy book for reprinting: now I have borrowed a Recueil of the Histories of Troy (the Wynkyn de Worde of course) from Quaritch, and have no doubt that the G. L. is by far the most important book of the two: so I accept your kind offer with many thanks indeed, and will begin printing as soon as the type is free from the Glittering Plain, which I take it will be the first book printed in the regenerate type or Jenson-Morris.

"I inclose a specimen (over-inked) of as far as we have gone at present. I hope you admire its literature —due of course to the compositor. Kind regards to the young she-scribe that is to be."

The idea of becoming a publisher as well as a printer was one which had not yet occurred to him. An experiment was talked of later, but never carried out, of dispensing with a publisher by printing off a book and then selling the whole edition by auction. For "The Golden Legend" an agreement for publication was entered into with Mr. Bernard Quaritch. "I don't mind having a publisher," Morris said, "so long as he has nothing whatever to do with any question except purely business ones. As to the 'prophet' I want none of him: I only want not to have to drop much, say not above £100." On this footing it was arranged. The agreement, signed on the 11th of September, 1890, provides that the publisher shall pay for the expenses of paper, printing, and binding, and that Morris is to have sole and absolute control over choice of paper and type, size of the reprint, and selection of the printer. The last-named provision indicates that Morris was then still uncertain whether to start a press of his own or to have his new type printed from by some existing firm of printers. The following two letters to Ellis continue the details of the enterprise.

"Kelmscott House,
"Sept. 7th, 1890.

"My dear Ellis,

"I gave Quaritch your letter in person, and we had a talk about the matter: by this time you will have had a letter from him. It seemed to me a matter of course to agree, as far as I am concerned, with his proposition to take the whole expense on himself and do what he can with the 250 copies, since it will then cost us nothing but our work: only it seems to me that your share of the work will be so much the heaviest that I feel rather uncomfortable about it, and think it somehow ought to be made up to you. What I have now chiefly to do is to push on the type-founding side of matters: I will do all I possibly can on this side, so that we may begin as soon as possible. I should think that we might get some type about Christmas time; but of course I cannot be sure. Wishing you good luck (I had little with the gudgeons),

"I am yours ever,
"WILLIAM MORRIS."

"Kelmscott,
"Sept. 14th, 1890.

"My dear Ellis,

"I have sent on Q.'s copy and now send back yours. Of course I should like the reprint to be of the same *form* as the original if the Roman type can do it, which I doubt, as black letter takes up less room: in any case some kind of folio it will have to be. As to paper I have heard of two people who may help us, one whom Walker knows and whose mill I propose to visit with Walker almost at once; and one employed by Allen, Ruskin's publisher. We can do nothing

with Whatman but take what he has on the shelves. In one thing I think I differ from you a little, *i.e.*, about the joined letters or queer signs: since our book is to be a *reprint*, not a fac-simile, I do not think that we need reproduce these: indeed I should extend the abbreviations in order to make the book more readable. However I am open to correction on this point. Don't rest too much on my date of Christmas for the type: we seem to be getting on very slowly with it at present, and I have only eleven letters cut yet. I can only hope for the best.

"Yours ever,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

By the middle of October "the type is getting on: I have all the lower case letters (26), also I have been designing ornamental letters, rather good I think." His excitement over the work was so great that for once he left Kelmscott, when autumn ended, with little regret. "We are coming to London to-day," he writes from there on the 16th of October. "The weather has been very good; our best day was Monday, when I hear you had a fog; it was a miracle of a day here: the sort of day when you really can do nothing but stand and stare at it. I am not sorry to come to town. I want to cease from being bumbled up and down. I want to work hard at my easy work."

The breaking up of the Socialist League and the constitution of the Hammersmith Socialist Society, though it took up a measure of his time for the next six weeks in London, hardly disturbed him materially, and did not check the progress of his other work. By the end of the year all but two of the punches for the type, both upper and lower case, were completed, and

a compositor and pressman, Mr. William Bowden, had been engaged. The paper was made from linen rag by Messrs. Batchelor & Son of Little Chart, near Ashford, after an Italian pattern of the fifteenth century, which Morris supplied. Such care was taken in its manufacture, that the wire moulds were woven by hand to reproduce the slight irregularity in the texture of those used by the earliest printers. Morris went down to Little Chart himself with Mr. E. Walker to see about this paper. With unabated interest in any form of manual art, he must take off his coat and try to make a sheet of paper with his own hands. At the second attempt he succeeded in doing very creditably what it is supposed takes a man several months to master.

In the course of the year Morris had made one more experiment in the use of type other than his own. This was a small edition of his own translation of the Gunnlaug Saga, which he had printed at the Chiswick Press in a Gothic type copied from a fount used by Caxton. The initials in this little book were left blank in order to be rubricated by hand; and Morris put them in himself on two or three copies: but the whole project went no further, and the little book was never published.

On the last day of the year he writes to Ellis:

"I am very glad that you are getting on so well and like the work. As for me I expect to have my type in a month, and shall take a room and see about comps. at once. The paper also will not be later, though this matters less as to our date of beginning. One thing may disappoint you—to wit, that we cannot make a double-column page of it, the page will not be wide enough. For my part, I don't regret it: double column seems to me chiefly fit for black letter, which prints up so close.

Jenson did not print even his Pliny in double column. But it is a case of *a fortiori* in modern printing: because we have no contractions, few tied letters, and we cannot break a word with the same frankness as they could: I mean we can't put whi on one side and ch on the other. This makes the spacing difficult, and a wide page desirable.

"Would you kindly give me the Initial letters of the first few sheets of our copy; I mean state whether they are A's B's and what not; I want this for our 'blooming-letters,' so that I may get ready those which are most wanted."

With the beginning of 1891 the Kelmscott Press actually started working. Its first premises, a cottage on the Upper Mall of Hammersmith a few yards from Kelmscott House, were taken possession of on the 12th of January. A proof-press and a printing-press were got and set up there. The first sample of the paper arrived on the 27th, and the first full trial page was set up and printed on the 31st. During February a sufficient working stock of both type and paper was delivered, and the regular working of the Press began. Mr. Bowden's son, who continued to work at the Press until it was closed, was engaged as compositor, and a third workman as pressman.

Meanwhile his research after fine specimens of fifteenth-century printing went on with unabated zeal. The following letter to J. H. Middleton refers to some of his most recent purchases, made from a dealer named Olschki, whose prices Morris thought rather exorbitant. Middleton was also in dealings with Mr. Olschki on behalf of the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, of which he was then Director.

"Kelmscott House,
"Jan. 20th, 1891.

"My dear Middleton,

"One of those books of Olschki's is a fine book otherwise (John Zeiner, Ulm, 1474) and rare doubtless, and has moreover a *very* fine woodcut border to first page and some curious initials: I am not buying it because there is, oddly enough, the same border in another of his books (by the same printer, 1475) which is much cheaper. This border is however so fine and so very well printed that I thought you might like it for the Fitzwilliam, since though I think it Jew-dear, I should have kept it if I had not got the other. The price is £15, but I daresay O. would take less. Shall I send it you to look at? I have just bought a very fine and interesting book: Speculum Humanæ Salvationis (in Dutch), Culembourg, Veldener, 1483. That says little; but the point of it is that it has in it *all* the cuts from the block-book Speculum (116) and 12 more seemingly of the same date. These are not recut, but are printed from the original blocks sawn in two down the columns of the canopies: some of these cuts are to my mind far away the best woodcuts ever done, and generally the designs are admirable: at once decorative, and serious with the devotional fervour of the best side of the Middle Ages. The date of the cutting you know is probably about 1430.

"Do you know if they have a copy at the University Library? If they have not I should like to show Mr. Jenkinson the book when I come your way. My copy belonged to the Enschede people, who you may know were a very old firm of typefounders.

"By the way I expect my press will be at work in about a month.

"Yours affectionately,
"WILLIAM MORRIS."

On the 11th of February he writes to Ellis:

"This is the state of things. The punches all cut, and matrices all struck: I had a little lot of type cast to see if any alterations were required, and set up a page of the 4to as there was not enough for the folio; I had the g recut because it seemed to me too black. I then ordered five cwt. of the type, which I am told is enough, and am expecting to have it towards the end of this week or beginning of next. As soon as I get it I will set up a trial page of the G. L.

"Then paper—the trial lot turned out not quite right, not sized quite hard enough, though I think better than any modern paper I have come across. He is going to size it harder. But it is only a little lot (9 reams), therefore I intend printing a little edition of the Glittering Plain on it. Moreover we had better not be too cock-sure about the paper, we *might* find it desirable to make a bigger sheet. In any case however we might set up a section or so of the G. L. and let the type be till we had got the paper right. I was not going to send you a specimen of the type till we could set up a page of the G. L. But I can sympathize with my pardner's anxiety; and accordingly send him a page of the G. P., of course full of defects, but on the paper and with the types. I don't know what you will think of it; but I think it precious good. Crane when he saw it beside Jenson thought it more Gothic-looking: this is a fact, and a cheerful one to me."

The first sheet of "The Story of the Glittering

Plain," which owing to this accidental collocation of circumstances was the first book printed at and issued from the Kelmscott Press, was printed off on the 2nd of March, and the last on the 4th of April. Only two hundred copies on paper, besides six on vellum, were printed. It was issued in May by Messrs. Reeves and Turner, Morris's ordinary publishers. The printing had been carried through under great difficulties. Towards the end of February Morris was laid up for several weeks with a severe attack of gout, attended by other symptoms of an alarming kind. On consultation the kidneys were found to be gravely affected; and he was told that henceforth he must consider himself an invalid to the extent of husbanding his strength and living under a very careful regimen.

In the height of the attack, and before he was able to hold a pen,—"my hand seems lead and my wrist string"—he writes to Ellis with unconquerable spirit:

"And now as to the joint enterprise: I have got my type and am hard at work on the Glittering Plain, which I hope to get out in about six weeks time; about the same time I expect the first instalment of my due stock of paper; and I don't see why we then should not be ready to go ahead with G. L., only I certainly must see you before we settle matters. Meantime, as soon as I can stand up, or before, I will get a mere trial page or two of the G. L. set up, and then you can get some idea of the number of pages.

"Yes, 'tis a fine thing to have some interesting work to do, and more than ever when one is in trouble—I found that out the other day."

From Folkestone, where he had gone to pick up his strength after this illness, he writes a month later, "I think I shall make some scratch of a border to each life or section. I want to make it grand. I have a

specimen of the new paper this morning, it is *admirable*—couldn't be better." While there, he designed the ornamental border for the first page of "The Golden Legend," and several of the large floriated initials, or "bloomers," as they are called in the traditional slang of the press. As soon as he came back to London, a regular pressman was permanently engaged (the one got in to help in the printing of "The Story of the Glittering Plain" had only been taken for the job) and the printing of "The Golden Legend" began to go steadily on. The first sheet was printed off by the middle of May: and before the end of that month the Press had been removed into larger premises in Sussex House, next door to the cottage first occupied by it.

"The new printed sheets of the G. L. look very well indeed," says a letter of the 20th of May. "Pleased as I am with my printing, when I saw my two men at work on the press yesterday with their sticky printers' ink, I couldn't help lamenting the simplicity of the scribe and his desk, and his black ink and blue and red ink, and I almost felt ashamed of my press after all. I am writing a short narrative poem to top up my new book with. My wig! but it is garrulous: I can't help it, the short lines and my old recollections lead me on."

The volume of his own collected verses which, under the title of "Poems by the Way," was the second book issued from the Kelmscott Press, did not actually begin to be printed till July: but during May he was busy in collecting and passing judgment on those shorter unpublished poems of his own which were to form its main contents. He was habitually careless about his own manuscripts, and kept no record of what he had written or even of what he had pub-

lished. Without the help of Mr. Fairfax Murray, into whose hands a number of the unpublished manuscripts had passed, and who had kept a record of all the poems which had ever been printed in magazines or elsewhere, the collection could hardly have been made. As it is, a number of his poems, which would have come within the general scope of the book, escaped his notice altogether. Apart from the longer narrative poems belonging to the period of "The Earthly Paradise," there are still sufficient of these yet unpublished pieces,—lyrics, sonnets, and ballads, —to make up a second volume of "Poems by the Way" as large as the first.

Among the pieces which had been rescued from total disappearance by Mr. Murray were a few belonging to the earliest years, the period of "The Defence of Guenevere." Of two of them he writes to Murray, "Catherine puzzles me: I have not the slightest recollection of any stanza of it. Did I write it? Is it a translation? I think not the latter; but it is devilish like. It is much too long, and I fear it is too rude to be altered. The Long Land I like in a fashion. But O the callowness of it! Item it is tainted with imitation of Browning, as Browning then was." None of these very early pieces were finally included in the volume published. The poem of "Goldilocks and Goldilocks," which concludes the volume, was the only one written for it now: the remainder of its contents, which are placed in a studied disarrangement, fall into two groups. One of these consists of poems written in the six or seven years between 1867 and 1874, the period which begins with "The Life and Death of Jason" and ends with "Love is Enough." The other is made up of poems of a period divided from the former by an interval of ten

years. It begins with the first of the "Chants for Socialists" of 1884; and includes the political verses, as they might be called, of militant Socialism, the fragments which he thought most worthy of survival from his versified Socialist romance of the "Pilgrims of Hope," and the ballads and romantic pieces of the three or four years which had elapsed since the beginnings of his return to literature. Intermediate between the two main groups, and of very various dates, are the verses for his own tapestries, or for Burne-Jones's pictures, of which between thirty and forty are printed in the volume. Only one poem previously unpublished, "The Folkmote by the River," belongs to the more recent years.

Some of the poems of the earlier period have a special history or association. "The God of the Poor" (which had already been printed in the Fortnightly Review for August, 1868) was almost, if not quite, the first piece he wrote when he resumed the writing of poetry after he had left Red House. The two beautiful lyrics, "From the Upland to the Sea" and "Meeting in Winter," are songs from "The Story of Orpheus," which had been written for "The Earthly Paradise," but never published. "A Garden by the Sea" is a later version of the song of the water-nymph to Hylas in the fourth book of "The Life and Death of Jason." The minute differences in language, in one of the most haunting and exquisitely finished of all his lyrics, are of no little interest. The lines "To the Muse of the North," it may be worth while to note, were written before his first visit to Iceland, and show more clearly than any comment how the land and all that had come from it filled his imagination. The curious poem entitled "Pain and Time Strive Not," which is of a date somewhere between

1871 and 1873, is remarkable as the single instance in which Morris, after the first enthusiasm of his early years in London had cooled, has distinctly imitated the manner and versification of Rossetti.

"The title of my new book," Morris wrote to his publishers in June, "will be Poems by the Way; the *format* the same as the Glittering Plain. It will be printed in red and black. The poems will include some recently written and some written many years ago. Some have appeared in magazines, but with the two exceptions of a little piece out of the Jason and one out of the Ogier, they will none of them have been printed in any book of mine."

The "little piece out of the Jason" is the one just mentioned; that from "Ogier the Dane," which was in the end not included, was one of the versions of the song beginning *in the white-flowered hawthorn brake*, in that poem. These two lyrics are, in the opinion of many judges, the most beautiful of all he ever wrote, and both are among the rare instances of lyrics which remained for years in his mind, and which he remodelled or retouched again and again. Two earlier versions of this latter piece are extant: its original form, as a lyric in the "Scenes from the Fall of Troy," has been already quoted. An intermediate version occurs in the cancelled and rewritten Prologue to "The Earthly Paradise." Whether the lyric which he proposed to insert in the new volume was one of these two earlier versions, or (as in the case of the lyric from "Jason") a later version than that already published, and in that case a fourth version of the same piece, there are now no means of discovering.

In this pleasant work, and in the active joy of returning health, the spring and summer passed easily

away. "The blossom is splendid," he writes on the 10th of May. "London in the older parts like the Inns of Court really looks well in this spring-time with the bright fresh green against the smoky old walls. Spring over, it becomes London again, and no more an enchanted city."

"I have the usual complaint at my pen's end of nothing to tell," he adds two days later. "The weather is beautifully bright and quite hot; the pear and cherry blossom is going off, and spring will soon have slid into summer, though the lilac is yet to come."

"It is a hottish close morning," says a letter of the 3rd of June, "rather dull with London smoke. I have just been down the garden to see how things were doing, and find that they are getting on. Not so many slugs and snails by a long way, and the new planted things are growing now; the sweet peas promising well, the peonies in bud, as well as the scarlet poppies. All well at the press: we are now really getting on, so that finishing the Golden Legend is looking something more than a dream."

At the end of July he writes from Folkestone to Mrs. Burne-Jones just before starting on a tour in Northern France with his daughter Jenny:

"I am ashamed to say that I am not as well as I should like, and am even such a fool as to be rather anxious—about myself this time. But I suppose the anxiety is part of the ailment. I hope you are better, as I have still some anxiety left for the service of my friends.

"On Sunday we had a strange show: a sea-fog came on in the afternoon after a bright morning, which gradually invaded the whole land under the downs; but we clomb to the top of them and found them and

all the uplands beyond lying under a serene calm sunny sky, the tops of the cliffs towards Dover coming bright and sharp above the fog, and throwing a blue shadow on it; below a mere sea of cloud, not a trace of the sea (proper), wave on wave of it. It looked like Long Jokull (in Iceland), only *that* was glittering white and this was goose-breast colour. I thought it awful to look on, and it made me feel uneasy, as if there were wild goings on preparing for us underneath the veil."

The French tour of three weeks in August was the renewal of one of his earliest affections: and he writes that his delight in the country, "the river-bottoms with the endless poplar forest, and the green green meadows," and in the beautiful churches, was as keen and as unclouded as it had been thirty-three years before. "I have given myself up to thinking of nothing but the passing day and keeping my eyes open."

The two letters which follow were written to Mr. Emery Walker on the journey. In the first, the reference at the beginning is to the fount of Gothic type which he had just designed for the Kelmscott Press, and which was now in course of being cut by Mr. Prince. "By the Way" in the second was the familiar and disrespectful title of his new volume of poems.

"Beauvais,
"August 13th, 1891.

"My dear Walker,

"Many thanks for your letter and inclosures. I chuckled over the upside down A. I have written to Prince: he has now done e i h l n o p r t. The t does not look well: I think I shall have to re-design

it. The e also looks a little wrong, but might be altered. The rest look very well indeed. I shall be pretty certainly at home on August 30. I leave for Soissons to-morrow, and I suppose shall get to Reims on Saturday. But I don't think we shall find any place better than this: the town is delightful quite apart from the Cathedral and St. Stephen's. Also our inn is comfortable, which is something. We went a long drive yesterday (morning drizzly, afternoon downright wet, but a jolly drive of near twenty miles and back) and saw the two churches of Gournay en Bray, and St. Germer en Fly: both early and interesting; the second exceedingly beautiful: a huge church, Norman, with vaulting and insertions of transitional, and a long lady-chapel with its vestibule, time of St. Louis (late thirteenth century). The chapel (not the vestibule) had been restored, pretty badly; but had three stained windows (of its own date) about as good as any I ever saw. The rest of the church quite unrestored: also there are grills of twelfth century round the choir. The west end, traditionally said to have been burned by the Burgundians (c. 1470), is very defective, but a plain (but good) abbey gateway remains. Altogether a wonderful church. Gournay, a much smaller church; the nave very early Norman (before the middle of century I should say), but with transition vaulting: transepts and choir mainly transition with each a big early decorated window in it: east end square and window coming low down. The carving on caps of nave very curious, no two alike; mostly rude (some very), but many beautiful. I am sorry to say that this admirable nave has been badly restored, even to the recutting of some of the caps: perhaps the French Society might stop this game, as those that are left are extraordinarily valuable. As to the west

front it *was* thirteenth century; but is now nineteenth, and bad at that; they have even done new sculptures for the tympanums. As for the town of Gournay it is uninteresting, but they make cream cheeses of the very best: *crede mihi experto.*

"Certainly the Cathedral here is one of the wonders of the world: seen by twilight its size gives one an impression almost of terror: one can scarcely believe in it. But when you see the detail, it is so beautiful that the beauty impresses you more than the size.

"We are just going to read the late stained glass at St. Stephen's, which is very amusing, lots of it.

"The arms of the chapter are gules a cross argent with four keys of the same cantoned if I blazon it right: the arms of the town, gules a pale argent. The town has lost its walls, but they are in a way traceable, for the town ditch fed by two little rivers goes all round: there is a very big central *place* also, so that the plan of the town is very good.

"Yours affectionately,
"WILLIAM MORRIS."

"Reims, Marne,
"August 16th.

"My dear Walker,

"We have just come out of the Cathedral, which, though a wonderful place, is, if I am right, not so great a work as Amiens, Beauvais, or Soissons. The latter was our last place on our way here. I thought the church there most extraordinarily beautiful. Except for the end of the north transept (which is early decorated) it is all of the earliest Gothic, not very big (but wide), of great simplicity and of the utmost refinement. The south transept is much lower

than the north and apsidal; the interior of it, of two vaulted stages, comparable in beauty to Hugh's work at Lincoln (though not like it), Gothic at its best. There have been some bad restorations there, but it is not destroyed. The worst is the black lining of the ashlar of the choir down to the triforium. Here the outside has already been restored (including the work they are doing to the south transept, which looks very bad), but excepting the west front with its amazing wealth of imagery: though they do not here seem to touch the figure sculptures. Perhaps it might be of use to memorialize the French Society upon this and some other points.

"Here the whole of the clerestory (except the windows of the choir blocked up by the restoration at present) has its stained glass, of the most splendid quality, though a good deal patched. If Grant Allen should see it he would find it justified his views of jewellery completely; for no collection of gems could come within a hundred miles of it. All the way from Beauvais to Compiègne, Soissons and here, the churches seem very fine and mostly early. The country round Soissons is very beautiful. It is built on the side of the Aisne, a river about as big there as the Thames at Reading: we saw vines there for the first time this journey. The arms of Soissons city are azure a fleur de lys argent. The chapter carries, I think, under a chief of France a tower. The tinctures I did not see, as I take my information from a lamp-post, of Napoleon's time, I suppose, as the fleur de lys were *bees*. There are some fine tapestries hung up in the aisles here in very good preservation, c. 1520 I think. They make splendid ornaments. I intend studying them and the stained glass and the sculpture to-morrow properly.

"I heard from Bowden that he has sent on another sheet and some Golden Legend, but it has not yet come: will to-morrow, I suppose. Jacobi has sent me two sheets of the cheap By the Way: it looks well. I have not done one letter since I started, my work being mostly staring and walking and eating. We intend going on to Laon on Tuesday, which will probably mean getting to Folkestone on Saturday or Sunday next and home the day after. Get Hooper to do the colophon before he goes off if you can, as otherwise it might stick us.

"Yours affectionately,
"WILLIAM MORRIS.

"St. Remy a very fine church: some glass there even finer than that in Cathedral, twelfth century."

On the 23rd of September he writes to his daughter Jenny at Kelmscott: "I expect the book"—the "Poems by the Way"—"will be all printed to-morrow, and will go to the binders on Monday. They are printing the colophon sheet to-day, which is exciting. Item, Mr. Quaritch has sent me in a specimen copy of volume 2 of the Saga Library, so I suppose I shall bring it along with me. I shall probably bring along a copy of the cheap 'Glittering. Plain,' and the cheap 'Poems by the Way' will soon be out. So you see, my own, that if it doesn't rain 'blue elephants' it may almost be said to rain new books of mine. Do you know, I do so like seeing a new book out that I have had a hand in. Mr. Prince is also getting on with the new fount of type, but when I shall begin to print with it I really don't know.

"Before I finish the news, I must tell you that about 6 o'clock yesterday a stout man called (like a Scotch

farmer) and announced himself as the keeper of the dogs at the Doggeries; he said he had wanted to take the house again, but I had forestalled him, and now he wanted to rent the kennels of me: he was so polite that all I could say was that I did not *think* I would, also that I would ask my wife. Of course I won't let him have them.

"I am going to give a dinner party on Friday to Ellis, Phillis and Cuthbert and Harry. And then on Saturday, ho for Kelmscott! I shall be *so* glad to see my dear again."

CHAPTER XX

PRINTING, ROMANCE-WRITING, TRANSLATION, AND CRITICISM: FINAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS ART AND HISTORY

1891-1893

THE life of Morris from that autumn until his last illness was one of placid continuity of production, with little variety of external incident. From the illness of the spring of 1891 he never fully recovered; and though he enjoyed several years more of fair health, his bodily powers became gradually less able to respond to the calls of his unflagging intellectual energy. The amount of work he had already done, in literature, in art, in politics, in handicraft, was enough to fill not one, but many lives; and the machinery which had been working at continuous high pressure for so long began to show signs of permanent weakening. But in these latter years his whole personality ripened and softened. The outbursts of temper so familiar to his earlier friends ceased. The impatience born of intense craving for sympathy and understanding died away. The training of the years of co-operation with impracticable colleagues in the Socialist party had not been lost. Mr. Selwyn Image, speaking from intimate acquaintance as a colleague on the executive com-

mittee of the Arts and Crafts Society and in the Art Workers' Guild, records, as the deepest impression made on him, that of Morris's extraordinary patience and conciliatoriness: and the same testimony is borne by others who worked along with him. "O how I long to keep the world from narrowing me, and to look at things bigly and kindly!" Thus he had written, in a letter of more than usually intimate self-revelation, nearly twenty years before: and the prayer had been heard. Like the southern autumn of Virgil, the year remained fruitful in its mellow decline:

—dant arbuta silvæ,
Et varios ponit fetus auctumnus, et alte
Mitis in apricis coquitur vindemia saxis.

The Kelmscott Press remained until towards the end of these years his engrossing preoccupation. Next to it in his interest were his own romances. He had practically ceased to write original poetry. As to one of these tales indeed, that entitled "Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair," he wavered for some time whether he should write it in verse or prose, and actually began it in verse, but quickly gave it up. He announced this decision to Burne-Jones the next time they met, observing at the same time, in what is perhaps the most sweeping of all his generalizations, that poetry was tommy rot. But the prose romances all contain snatches of lyric verse, and besides his metrical rendering of "Beowulf," other verse, original and translated, was written by him now and again. Foremost perhaps in beauty among these lyrics of later summer, and deserving to be reclaimed here from the obscure pages of the Catalogue of the fourth Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Society, are the verses which he wrote for an embroidered hanging, designed

and worked by his daughter May for his own bed, a fine piece of carved oak of the seventeenth century, in the Manor House at Kelmscott.

The wind's on the wold
And the night is a-cold,
And Thames runs chill
'Twixt mead and hill.
But kind and dear
Is the old house here
And my heart is warm
'Midst winter's harm.
Rest then and rest,
And think of the best
'Twixt summer and spring,
When all birds sing
In the town of the tree,
And ye lie in me
And scarce dare move,
Lest earth and its love
Should fade away
Ere the full of the day.
I am old and have seen
Many things that have been;
Both grief and peace
And wane and increase.
No tale I tell
Of ill or well,
But this I say,
Night treadeth on day,
And for worst and best
Right good is rest.

Besides his own story-writing, he continued the pleasant labour of translating from the Icelandic and mediæval French. He lectured, when time and strength permitted, on the arts of life, more especially now on printing and its kindred arts. He remained active in the service of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings. Whether in the defence of ancient buildings like Westminster Abbey and Peterborough Cathedral against the injuries of the restorer, or in the

protection of the natural beauties of England, as in Epping Forest or on the upper Thames, against the inroads of planned ugliness or inconsiderate change, his voice and pen were always active when called upon. Nor did he decline from the unobtrusive work of education towards the growth of a future Socialism. It is to these last years that some of his noblest and most significant utterances on the ideals of human life belong—notably among them the preface to Ruskin's chapter "On the Nature of Gothic," and the letter of November, 1893, on the Miners' Question, his latest and most carefully-worded confession of faith.

In October, 1891, an exhibition of pictures of the Pre-Raphaelite School was held in the Municipal Art Gallery at Birmingham, and Morris was asked to open it with an address on the Pre-Raphaelite painters. The speech which he then made represents the most formal discourse he had yet given on the art of painting, as one distinct from, yet in the closest relation to, the arts which he himself practised. It perhaps expresses his views not the less exactly because it was spoken on the spur of the moment, and was the imperfect but immediate utterance of his habitual feelings. The curiously halting sentences and inconclusive termination are accounted for very simply. He had meant to think out what he would say on the journey down to Birmingham, but fell asleep in the train and arrived with nothing prepared.

Professing himself a humble member of the school, he stated as his deliberate conviction that its principal masters, Rossetti, Millais, Holman Hunt, and Burne-Jones, were names that ranked alongside of the very greatest in the great times of art: then, not labouring this point, he commended their example to all artists, not primarily for any technical quality, but for the virtues

of patience, diligence, and courage. These were the qualities that went to make great men ; and great men might be trusted to do great work.

As regards the technique of painting, Morris had, from his own early practice of the art as well as from the insight of his immense genius, a knowledge that was not less great because he seldom showed it. But the art of painting always took its place in his mind as one of the arts subordinate to architecture, though it might be the first of these. The inflexible naturalism and minute finish of the early Pre-Raphaelites, he held, were necessary at the time to startle men out of the lethargy of a long convention, but they hardly represented the permanent method in which the painter's art should employ itself. His own artistic intelligence had been as a matter of fact first awakened by that militant and, one might almost say, aggressive type of picture. "I remember distinctly myself," he said in this address when speaking of the Pre-Raphaelite revolt against an outworn academic tradition, "as a boy, that when I had pictures offered to my notice I could not understand what they were about at all. I said 'Oh well, that is all right: it has got the sort of thing in it which there ought to be in a picture : there is nothing to be said against it, no doubt. I cannot say I would have had it other than that, because it is clearly the proper thing to do.' But really I took very little interest in it." For a short period he had been as profound an admirer of the earlier work of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as any of the school, and had himself worked hard at being a painter in the Pre-Raphaelite manner. When this temporary enthusiasm passed over, pictures took a place in his mind among the various methods of decorating surfaces. Except for his unbroken and almost daily intimacy

with Burne-Jones, he did not see much of painters as such, nor was he a frequenter of studios or picture galleries. When he did see a picture he saw what there was in it at a single glance; his eye for both design and colour was here, as elsewhere, infallible, and his memory portentous. But easel-pictures seem, as a rule, to have given him the uneasy feeling of decoration disproportionate in labour and finish to its decorative object. With a painted book he had not this feeling; nor with the gem-like masterpieces of the Flemish and early Italian schools which approximate in method and finish to the pictures in a painted book. But for pictures on a larger scale and in a broader manner he would have preferred frescoes or even tapestries. Sir Edward Burne-Jones told me that Morris would have liked the faces in his pictures less highly finished, and less charged with the concentrated meaning or emotion of the painting. As with the artists of Greece and of the Middle Ages, the human face was to him merely a part, though no doubt a very important part, of the human body. In speaking of the qualifications required from tapestry-weavers, it was on their skill in rendering the feet and hands, not the faces, of the figures, that he laid special stress. He was quite satisfied with the simple and almost abstract types of expression that can be produced in tapestry; and he thought that the dramatic and emotional interest of a picture ought to be diffused throughout it as equally as possible. Such too was his own practice in the cognate art of poetry: and this is one reason why his poetry affords so few memorable single lines, and lends itself so little to quotation. Either quality would have been a merely incidental merit, and perhaps even a defect, in the view of his art which he himself held.

With the National Gallery indeed, or at least with

those rooms in it which contained the works which were after his own heart, he was intimately familiar. Angelico, Van Eyck, and Holbein, his three greatest admirations among the painters of past ages, he admired as profoundly as he did any artist whatever. In one of the later numbers of the Commonweal, while discussing in a fragmentary and parenthetic way what the art of the future under realized Socialism might be like, he makes some remarks on the pictures in the National Gallery which incidentally open up his whole mind on the subject of pictorial art. "Perhaps," he says, "mankind will regain their eyesight, which they have lost to a great extent; people have largely ceased to take in mental impressions through the eyes, whereas in times past the eyes were the great feeders of the fancy and imagination. I am in the habit when I go to an exhibition or a picture gallery of noticing their behaviour there; and as a rule I note that they seem very much bored, and their eyes wander vacantly over the various objects exhibited to them. If ordinary people go to our National Gallery, the thing which they want to see is the Blenheim Raphael, which, though well done, is a very dull picture to any one not an artist. While, when Holbein shows them the Danish princess of the sixteenth century yet living on the canvas, the demure half-smile not yet faded from her eyes; when Van Eyck opens a window for them into Bruges of the fourteenth century; when Botticelli shows them Heaven as it lived in the hearts of men before theology was dead, these things produce no impression on them, not so much even as to stimulate their curiosity and make them ask what 'tis all about; because these things were done to be looked at, and to make the eyes tell the mind tales of the past, the present, and the future." Yet deeply as Morris admired these pictures, he scarcely loved them with

his deepest love; he would willingly at any time have exchanged the National Gallery and all its contents for the cases of painted books in the British Museum. A man may be known by his company, inanimate as well as human; and while Morris had a small but choice collection of painted books among his chief treasures, and gladly paid large sums to secure one, his house was, with a few exceptions for which there were special reasons, pictureless, and he never bought a picture after the early days when he had ceased trying to paint them.

From this brief excursion into art criticism he returned to the work of his printing-press. In November he was discussing the printing of all his own works, meaning then to begin with the "Sigurd." A second and larger press had been bought, and a new pressman and two new compositors engaged; and the printing of the Interminable, as "The Golden Legend" had come to be called, was making rapid progress. Before the end of the year he was discussing the form of the great Chaucer which it was his ambition to print. The Troy type, the first of his two Gothic founts, had been cut and was then being cast: but "it is so big that it is no use thinking of printing the Chaucer in double columns with it unless the book were to be as big as Eggestein's Gratian's Decretum,"—a leviathan among printed books, of which an uncut copy measures twenty inches by fifteen and weighs nearly thirty pounds. Before the end of the year he had determined on having another fount cut smaller from the same designs; and these two, with the original Roman or "Golden" fount, were the only three that he actually produced and printed from, though in the course of the year 1892 he partially designed another. "I am at work at my story and other trifles," he writes to

Ellis just before Christmas. But he was so busy now with the Press that even story-telling had to be dropped. This was one of several romances which he began in these years, and discontinued either because he was not satisfied with them or from mere lack of time. "The Wood beyond the World," his next published romance, was not completed till quite two years later.

The small printing-press had been occupied during the earlier part of the winter of 1891-2 in turning out the third of the Kelmscott Press books, the volume of poems by Mr. Wilfrid Blunt. As soon as that volume was finished, it was set to work upon a reprint of Ruskin's celebrated chapter "On the Nature of Gothic" from "The Stones of Venice." It was the first thing that, when Morris met with it long ago at Oxford, had set fire to his enthusiasm, and kindled the beliefs of his whole life. In the preface to this reprint, dated 15th February, 1892, he states briefly and clearly the effect which Ruskin's teaching had had on himself, and the permanent value which he still conceived it to possess. "To my mind," he says, this chapter "is one of the most important things written by the author, and in future days will be considered as one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century. To some of us when we first read it"—in those dawn-golden days at Oxford—"now many years ago, it seemed to point out a new road on which the world should travel. The lesson which Ruskin here teaches us is that art is the expression of man's pleasure in labour; that it is possible for man to rejoice in his work, for, strange as it may seem to us to-day, there have been times when he did rejoice in it."

Even more: in this chapter, and in the subsequent teaching which did little more than expand and

enforce it, Ruskin had laid, once for all, the basis for a true Socialism. For without art Socialism would remain as sterile as the other forms of social organization; it would not meet the real and perpetual wants of mankind. The social doctrines of the thinkers and theorists who had preceded Ruskin, like those of the others who, coming after him, had ignored or denied this essential element in his doctrine, would in practice "certainly lighten the burden of labour, but would not procure for it the element of sensuous pleasure which is the essence of all true art." Of themselves they could go no further in their utmost success than create a world in which art would be possible: but that world would be a body still waiting, numb, joyless, and lifeless, for the entrance of the quickening spirit.

This preface was no sooner written, than Morris followed it by another utterance which has had little public circulation, but which gives his best literary qualities—his power of lucid statement, his immense and easily-wielded knowledge of architecture and history, his earnestness, his humour, and his mastery of biting phrase—with a perfection that is hardly equalled elsewhere. This was the paper on Westminster Abbey written by him for the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings and finished on the 7th of March. Its immediate occasion was a proposal then being discussed for the "complete restoration" of the interior of the Abbey, and the addition to it, by public munificence or private enterprise, of some kind of annex which might give room for further monuments to distinguished men. That such a consummate monument of the noblest style and period of European architecture should be turned, as it long had been, into a "registration office for notorieties" was felt by him as wanton and inexcusable sacrilege: and

this proposal not only to continue and extend that degrading usage, but to mutilate the Abbey still further under such a pretext by remodelling or enlargement, was one the mere mention of which roused him into fury. As regards the church itself, each fresh piece of restoration was in his deliberate judgment more scandalous and more ruinous than its predecessors. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it had indeed suffered heavily, but its worst sufferings had been reserved for modern times. "Being situated in the centre of government," he bitterly writes, "it has not enjoyed the advantages of boorish neglect, which have left so much of interest in remoter parts of the country." On the work of Wren and his successors down to Wyatt, the architects of "the ignorance," to use that Arabian phrase which Morris was so fond of quoting, he touches with a light scorn, gibbeting their work as "the Bible and Prayer-book style of the period," "the queer style of driven-into-a-corner Classic." With Wyatt and the first period of Gothic knowledge, whose architects were far more destructive than those of the Gothic ignorance, worse changes began. Wyatt "managed to take all the romance out of the exterior of the most romantic work of the late Middle Ages," Henry VII.'s Chapel. Blore, followed by Gilbert Scott, "completely destroyed all trace of the handwork of the mediæval masons" in the north aisle. Scott, when he was made architect of the Abbey and the second period of Gothic knowledge had arrived, "carefully restored the Chapter House, that is, he made it a modern building." Finally Mr. Pearson, "driven by the necessity of making some structural repairs," carried out the idea of making a conjectural restoration of the north transept. The façade of the eighteenth century, a time when archi-

tects "had not learned how to forge, and put some of their own thought, poor as that was, into it," was accordingly destroyed. It was replaced by "dead-alive office work," covered with "what is called ecclesiastical sculpture—so utterly without life or interest that nobody who passes under the portal of the church on which it is plastered treats it as a work of art any more than he does the clergyman's surplice," "a joyless, putty-like imitation, that had better have been a plaster-cast." As for the "pieces of undertakers' upholstery" within the church, all that could be done with them was to let them alone. "The burden of their ugliness must be endured, at any rate until the folly of restoration has died out; for the greater part of them have been built into the fabric, and their removal would leave gaps, not so unsightly indeed as those stupid masses of marble, but tempting to the restorer, who would make them excuses for further introduction of modern work."

"It may seem strange," Morris adds, rising into the higher plane of his habitual thoughts, "that whereas we can give some distinguished name as the author of almost every injury it has received, the authors of this great epic itself have left no names behind them. For indeed it is the work of no one man, but of the people of south-eastern England. It was the work of the inseparable will of a body of men, who worked, as they lived, because they could do no otherwise, and unless you can bring these men back from the dead, you cannot 'restore' one verse of their epic. Rewrite the lost trilogies of Æschylus, put a beginning and an end to the Fight at Finsbury, finish the Squire's Tale for Chaucer, and if you can succeed in that, you may then 'restore' Westminster Abbey."

By this time the smaller Gothic fount was being cut

for the Kelmscott Chaucer, after a momentary hesitation caused by his having seen for the first time the earlier or semi-Gothic type ("what asses they were to change it for the Roman type" is his characteristic comment) used by Sweynheym and Pannartz for the Subiaco Lactantius. Much of the immense vitality of earlier years still survived, though more and more fitfully: on the 9th of April, "happening to be awake at 6 a.m. I went and got my book and wrote several pages of story." In May he was beginning to see daylight at last with "The Golden Legend." The two magnificent drawings by Burne-Jones of the Earthly and Heavenly Paradises had been completed, and the first was now being cut on the wood. Both were touched up for the wood-engraver by Mr. Fairfax Murray in a photographic copy. The last sheet of the text was read by Morris in proof on the 31st of May. The large printer's mark with a picture of the house at Kelmscott in it, which Morris then meant to design for his colophon, was not executed, and was replaced in the book as it appeared by the device which had already appeared in several of the smaller books, a small design with the words "Kelmscott" and "William Morris" in Gothic lettering on a floriated background and border.

Meanwhile Morris sought consolation for any occasional qualms that he may have had as to the artistic limitations of the finest printed books in a more and more impassioned devotion to thirteenth-century manuscripts. At the sale of the Lawrence collection this month he spent £250 on three of those, a little Psalter and little Book of Hours and the fragment of a folio Bible. Nearly all summer through he stayed in London by his Press, though with wistful thoughts now and again of haymaking going on fast in the big

meadow, and of the hollyhocks in the garden at Kelmscott. Burne-Jones was beginning the series of drawings for Chaucer, and the form and detail of the great folio was taking definite shape in Morris's mind. By the middle of September the printing of the Interminable was done, the two great full-page woodcuts being the last part, as they were the most anxious, to print. On the 16th it went off, in two cartloads, in joyful procession to the binders. To celebrate the auspicious and long-awaited event Morris bought a vellum copy of Jenson's "Clementis Constitutiones" of 1476, and then took himself off to Kelmscott.

Once the Press was released from "The Golden Legend," the production of smaller books went on through the winter of 1892-3 with accelerated and almost reckless speed. The reprint of Caxton's "Historyes of Troye," the first book issued in the large Gothic type which Morris had designed in 1891, as the famous original had been, more than four hundred years before, the first book printed in English, is dated the 14th of October. It was rapidly succeeded by the "Biblia Innocentium," dated 22nd October; "News from Nowhere," dated 22nd November; and the reprint of Caxton's "Reynard the Foxe" of 1481, dated 15th December. This last Morris accounted far and away the best of all Caxton's books in its literary quality: "he has the true smell and smile." Then followed the "Poems of William Shakespeare," dated 17th January, 1893; and after it, the reprint of Caxton's "Order of Chivalry" of 1484, dated 10th November, 1892, but held back in order to be issued in a single volume together with another little book. This was the text and Morris's own verse translation of "L'Ordene de Chevalerie," a French poem of the thirteenth century which has

been thought to be the original of the fourteenth-century prose treatise translated and printed by Caxton. It is dated 24th of February, 1893. The translation had first been made in prose by Ellis. But Morris one day suddenly remembered the fact that the Press, like the firm of thirty years back, "kept a poet of its own," and turned him on for the purpose. Finally, to make up the production of that remarkable winter, appeared Cavendish's "Life of Wolsey," dated 30th March; and the reprint of Caxton's "Godefrey of Boloyne" of 1481, dated 27th April. In the "Order of Chivalry," and in parts of the "Historyes of Troye," the smaller Gothic type which had been cut and cast for the Chaucer made its first appearance. After this continuous torrent of production the Press for a time slackened off a little. Morris was advised that this rapid output of his books would depreciate the value of those already issued, and might end in the new books becoming unsaleable at their fair value. But for these warnings he did not greatly care: "the Kelmscott Press is humming" was his exultant comment, and he felt sure that his work was good enough to command a market. "I *shall* print that Froissart" was all his reply to an argument that it could only be printed as he designed it at a heavy loss. But the Froissart, which was to have taken the next place after the Chaucer among his most rich and elaborate productions, was little more than begun when the Press ceased after the death of its founder.

By the end of 1892 Morris had made up his mind to add the trade of a publisher to that of a printer. "There is really no risk in it," he said in summing up the situation: "I shall get more money; and the public will have to pay less." The reprint of Caxton's

"Reynard the Foxe," then just finished, was in fact the last of his large books that he issued through a publisher, though with the smaller books the old practice was for some time continued. But the reprint of Caxton's "Godefrey of Boloyne," issued in the following May, bore on it for the first time the words "Published by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press": the "Utopia" of the following September was the last Kelmscott book issued through Messrs. Reeves & Turner; and thenceforth, except in a few cases of special arrangement (as when Tennyson's "Maud" was published by Messrs. Macmillan, and the two volumes of Rossetti's poems by Messrs. Ellis & Elvey), Morris published all Kelmscott Press books himself. Once more, as in so many previous ventures, he trusted to the existence of a market for excellence and was not disappointed. The Kelmscott Press was not carried on to make money: at first he would have been content if it had not cost him more than he could afford to spend, and even afterwards it was worked, and the prices fixed for its products, only with the view of making its receipts meet its expenditure. No expense was spared in getting everything connected with it as near his ideal as could be produced; yet in fact it brought in a profit which represented a fairly adequate salary for his own incessant work and oversight, and relieved him from the necessity of economizing on any expense which would really add to the excellence and beauty of his printed books.

In the immense detail of carrying on the work of the Press, which was beyond a single person's management unless he could give up the whole of his time to it, Morris was already being assisted by Mr. S. C. Cockerell, who was formally engaged as secretary to

the Press in July, 1894. It is only due to Mr. Cockerell to say that these last years of Morris's life were greatly lightened by his diligence and devotion. For the first time in his life his papers were kept in order: the labour of correspondence, which had always been irksome to him, and was one of the few things that he felt as really hard work, was relieved: his library was catalogued; and the conduct, not only of the Press, but of his whole business, was made as easy to him as the nature of the case admitted. The relations between them grew to be of great intimacy and confidence, and added much to the happiness of both.

At the beginning of 1893 the beautiful little series of translations from thirteenth-century French prose romances which were printed by Morris in this and the following year began to be projected. "There is a little book," he wrote in January, "of the Librairie Elzévirienne hight Contes et Nouvelles de la XIIIme Siècle: two of these are amongst the most beautiful works of the Middle Ages, and I intend translating them, and printing in a nice little book in Chaucer type. Probably I shall design some two-coloured letters for it."

The work of which he misquotes the title with his characteristic carelessness when he was writing a letter, "Nouvelles Françoises en prose du XIIIme Siècle," a little book published in 1856, had for thirty years been one of the treasures of literature to him. Together with the "Violier des Histoires Romaines," which appeared in the same series two years later, it had been among the first sources of his knowledge of the French romance of the Middle Ages. In thanking Morris for a copy of the last of the three little Kelmscott volumes, Mr. Swinburne recalls their delight in reading the French "in the days when we

first foregathered at Oxford" nearly forty years before. On two of the stories in the French volume, "Le Conte de l'Empereur Coustant" and "L'Amitié d'Amis et d'Amile," he had based two of the stories for "The Earthly Paradise"; the former appears in the work under the title of "The Man Born to be King"; the latter was the never published poem of "Amis and Amillion." He now translated and printed these and two others. The fifth, the famous pastoral romance of Aucassin and Nicolete, he left untouched, as it was already well known in two English versions. The first of the stories which Morris published, a translation of the romance entitled "Le Conte du Roi Flore et de la Belle Jehanne," was issued under the title of "The Tale of King Florus and the Fair Jehane" at the end of this year. It is dated 16th of December, 1893. "Amis and Amile" succeeded it in April, 1894: "the Amis and Amile I translated in one day and a quarter, it was *very* easy: a most beautiful little book"; and "The Tale of the Emperor Coustans," with which was included a fourth story, "L'Histoire d'Outre-Mer," entitled in the English "The History of Over Sea," in the following September. The project of two-colour letters printed from double blocks was never carried out by him in these or any other of the Kelmscott Press books, though several designs in red and blue were made by him for that purpose.

"I am very busy all round, and ought to be busier, but can't be," he cheerfully writes in March. He had set to work on designing the ornament for the Kelmscott Chaucer. That for the first page was just finished to his complete satisfaction. "My eyes! how good it is!" was his own criticism on it. He had also begun his metrical version of "Beowulf." That great fragment of the earliest English epic he had

hitherto only admired from a distance. He was not an Anglo-Saxon scholar, and to help him in following the original he used the aid of a prose translation made for him by Mr. A. J. Wyatt, of Christ's College, Cambridge, with whom he also read through the original. The plan of their joint labours had been settled in the autumn of 1892. Mr. Wyatt began to supply Morris with his prose paraphrase in February, 1893, and he at once began to "rhyme up," as he said, "very eager to be at it, finding it the most delightful work." He was working at it all through the year, and used to read it to Burne-Jones regularly on Sunday mornings in summer. It was not fully finished till the end of 1894, and was published in February, 1895. It would seem on the whole, in spite of the love and labour Morris had bestowed on it, to be one of his few failures. Anglo-Saxon scholars do not regard it as a satisfactory rendering of the original; and still less do ordinary readers find it a book that can be read with pleasure for its own sake. For the language of his version Morris for once felt it necessary to make an apology. Except a few words, he said, the words he used in it were such as he would not hesitate to use in an original poem of his own. He did not add, however, that their effect, if slipped sparingly in amid his own pellucid construction and facile narrative method, would be very different from their habitual use in a translation which must in any case, if it were faithful to the original, be often both harsh and obscure. In his desire to reproduce the early English manner he allowed himself a harshness of construction and a strangeness of vocabulary that in many passages go near to making his version unintelligible. A poem which professes to be modern and yet requires a glossary fails of one of its primary objects. The

obscurity of many parts of the original, made more obscure by gaps and corruptions in the text, cannot be got over in any translation which Morris would have regarded, or which it is possible fairly to regard, as faithful: but this means that the only translation practicable is a paraphrase, an "interpretation," as it was called in the old editions of the classics, which shall not profess to reproduce the original, but confine itself to the humbler use of being printed below the original to make it easier of comprehension. As the work advanced, he seems to have felt this himself, and his pleasure in the doing of it fell off. Between this, and the slow progress of the Chaucer, which was chiefly owing to the great difficulty of getting Burne-Jones's designs satisfactorily rendered upon wood—"we shall be twenty years at this rate in getting it out," he writes rather dolefully in May—he was not in the best of spirits that summer about his printing, and began to think that some caution in restricting his output might be not undesirable.

Another matter which seriously vexed him was the total defeat in Convocation, in June, 1893, of his attempt to save the mediæval statuary on the spire of St. Mary's, Oxford, from the hands of the restorer. Those images were much decayed and loosened by past neglect, and were as they stood admittedly unsafe: the question, therefore, became one in which Morris's principles as regards restoration came into the sharpest conflict with those of the ordinary architect. Stated briefly, the question was one of sacrificing truth and history on the one hand, or appearance on the other. "Jackson took me up on the spire," Morris writes after his return from Oxford, "and I had a good look at the images and fought Jackson at every point. The fact is, he would now willingly keep the images, if he

could do so without visibly banding and tying them, but this he funks. This was my chief point; as I refused to be led into a discussion as to whether they could be tied up to look *neat*, but stuck to it that even if they had to be covered with a cage of bars it should be done rather than removing them"—and replacing them, it is to be understood, by copies professing to be originals.

The twelve statues grouped round the base of that magnificent spire, still in spite of all restorations and reconstructions the "eye of Oxford," the central crown of all her architecture, were among the noblest surviving examples of English sculpture of the early fourteenth century. Time and neglect had seriously impaired several of them; and in the first restoration of the spire, carried out by the architect Buckler according to the ideas of that "second period of Gothic knowledge" which Morris held in such profound contempt, just at the time when Morris himself went up to Exeter as an undergraduate, two had been wholly removed and replaced, and some of the others had been largely repaired. When the second restoration was decided upon and placed in the hands of Mr. T. G. Jackson, the ten ancient statues were the only important features of the spire which had not been already tampered with, and their importance was thus doubled. Mr. Jackson's first report was that they were all so much perished that it was not safe to allow even their ruins to remain. Owing to the decay of the holdfasts certain heads and hands were so loose that they could be lifted off. But the surface of the stone had weathered to such hardness that it resisted the point of a knife; and the bodies, which were solid set into the wall behind them, had actually to be sawn from their settings before they could be taken down.

The noble figures of the Virgin, of St. Edward the Confessor, and of St. John the Baptist, as they now lie stored in the basement of the Convocation House, may be specially cited as examples, apart from any question of historic interest, of the purest feeling and most consummate artistic excellence. Of the copies by which they have been replaced on the base of the now doubly and triply reconstructed mass of pinnacles from which the central spire springs into the sunlight, it may be left to future generations to judge. But the judgment will be—so Morris insisted—upon works of the nineteenth century which profess to be, and are not, works of nearly six hundred years earlier.

The death of Tennyson in October, 1892, had left vacant the titular primacy of English poetry, which he had held for forty-two years. When the question of appointing a new Poet Laureate was opened, the name of Morris, as by amount and quality of actual work produced undoubtedly among the foremost of living English poets, was one of those which could not be ignored. His political creed would indeed have assorted but strangely with the holding of an office in the Royal Household; nor could any one who knew him, however slightly, think without a smile of his writing official odes, or posing as the eulogist of the existing order and the triumphs of the Victorian age. As regards his personal views on the matter, Mr. Gladstone, who had then just become for the fourth time Prime Minister, kept his own counsel: and it is matter of common knowledge that no recommendation was ever made by him to the Queen, and that the office remained unfilled for three years during his Government and the administration which succeeded it. But after this lapse of time it may not be indiscreet to say that Morris was sounded by a member of the Cabinet, with

Mr. Gladstone's knowledge and approval, to ascertain whether he would accept the office in the event of its being offered to him. His answer was unhesitating. He was frankly pleased that he had been thought of, and did not undervalue the implied honour: but it was one which his principles and his tastes alike made it impossible for him to accept. The matter went no further. In private conversation Morris always held that the proper function of a Poet Laureate was that of a ceremonial writer of official verse, and that in this particular case the Marquis of Lorne was the person pointed out for the office—should the office be thought one worth keeping up under modern conditions—by position and acquirements.

While the Socialist organizations had been dwindling as active forces, the permeation of public opinion by Socialistic ideas had continued to make slow but noticeable progress. Taught by bitter experience, the more thoughtful Socialists no longer held haughtily aloof from the means at their hand by which they might take part in the work of local government. The old idea of obstructing reform in order to precipitate revolution did not now hold its place except among a few extremists. Work directed towards common objects began to make the differences on which the party had divided and subdivided itself fall back into something nearer their true proportion: and in 1893 efforts began to be made towards re-uniting the party. In these efforts Morris cordially joined, though he no longer accepted the position of a leader, or allowed the work he contributed towards this object to encroach largely on his time and energy. He defined the work to be done as the promotion of common ideals based on the teaching of history. Towards that object, he this year carefully revised the series of articles which he had written for

the Commonweal between 1886 and 1888, in collaboration with Mr. E. B. Bax, and issued them as a volume under the title of "Socialism, its Growth and Outcome." On the 1st of May—the anniversary which, under the name of Labour Day, it had been sought to constitute as an international festival of the working classes both in Europe and America—he joined with Mr. Hyndman and Mr. G. B. Shaw, as the representatives of the principal associations in England holding Socialist doctrines, in drawing up and issuing a new irenicon under the title of the "Manifesto of English Socialists." In this manifesto the common principles of the movement were once more stated, and a last appeal made towards the sinking of differences and the reinstatement of harmonious working on different methods towards common ends. It is signed by the fifteen members of a joint Committee which had been appointed for this purpose by the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, and the Hammersmith Socialist Society, and was issued with the authority of all three bodies.

The manifesto bears the traces of a joint authorship in which the hand of Mr. Shaw and the inspiration of Mr. Sidney Webb are more plainly visible than those of Morris. But it fairly represents the moderate and practical views which Morris held in the last years of his life. By a brief review of the facts it is shown that some constructive social theory is absolutely needed. Of these there are really only three. Two of the three must be rejected: the Feudal or Tory theory, which is incompatible with modern conditions and the fact of democracy; and the Manchester or Whig theory, which has completely broken down in practice. The third is Socialism. No amount of moralization of the conditions of a

capitalist society based on private property can do away with the necessity for abolishing it, as a step towards the creation of the new social order. Legislative readjustments of industry and administration, while they may be desirable as temporary expedients, will not be permanently useful unless the whole state is merged into an organized commonwealth. For the realization of the new order, the whole community must possess complete ownership and control of the means for creating and distributing wealth; it must put an end to the wage-system; it must sweep away all distinctions of class, and finally establish national and international Communism. Anarchism, whether as a doctrine or a system of tactics, is formally repudiated in all its forms. The ameliorative measures which, under the heightened sensitiveness of the public conscience, are within the scope of practical politics, are not to be opposed, but supported and welcomed. The more that such measures give, either to individuals or to whole bodies of the working class, of leisure for thought and freedom from anxiety, the more will that working class be able to turn their attention and exert their powers towards the introduction of a new social order based on equality of condition. There is therefore no reason why Socialists should not constitute themselves into a distinct party with definite immediate aims. Among these are mentioned an Eight Hours Act, an adequate minimum or living wage for all working men or women employed either in the Government service or in monopolies under partial state-control, the suppression of sub-contracting and sweating, and universal suffrage. Ten years had elapsed since a theory and a programme not unlike this had induced Morris to join the newly-founded Democratic Federation. The wheel

might seem to have come full circle. But the experience, the thought, the labour of ten years had given to all the terms employed, and to all the measures advocated, an enlarged and deepened meaning. There had been much disappointment, much disillusion, much wreckage of unverified beliefs and extravagant hopes. The work had been tried by fire and tempest; over and over again had the superstructure crumbled or been consumed away down to the foundations. But these foundations, such was Morris's permanent conviction, were in the rock, and imperishable.

Any later expressions of his mind with regard to the immediate duties which lay before Socialists are in complete consonance with the manifesto of 1893. One of the most significant of these occurs in an address on Art and Labour which he delivered to the Guild of Lithographic Artists in February, 1894. "The new birth of art," he said there, "will be brought about noiselessly, gradually, and without violent change. We already see springing up round us the germs of this new life, the outward signs of which are trades-unionism, socialism, and co-operation." Such at least were his reported words. Whether or not he actually employed the singular collocation of the last sentence, the fact remains that Socialism as a practical movement, though not as an ultimate ideal, had come in his mind to occupy a place alongside of other movements, all of which were incomplete manifestations of a single spirit. It no longer anathematized whatever lay outside of its own specific body of doctrine. From extreme intransigeance it had swung back to something approaching opportunism. *He that is not against us is on our part* was rapidly becoming its test of orthodoxy.

Thus the formal organization of a united Socialist party was a matter which, though he was willing to co-operate towards its realization, he did not think of the first importance. On the 25th of October, 1894, he wrote on behalf of the Hammersmith Socialist Society to Mr. R. Blatchford, who had been urging this point in the Clarion newspaper. In that letter he expressed his conviction that the union, if attainable, might and should be effected without any interference with the existing organizations. But he was equally clear that all minor differences among these organizations should be sunk in view of a general assent in the aim of nationalizing the means of production. A declaration of agreement in this aim would, he thought, be sufficient as a test of membership in a united Socialist party.

It may not be irrelevant to add here the last pronouncement on the subject which Morris made before his death. In answer to an American correspondent who had asked whether he had altered his views as to Socialism, he replied on the 9th of January, 1896:

"I have *not* changed my mind on Socialism. My view on the point of relation between Art and Socialism is as follows: Society (so-called) at present is organized entirely for the benefit of a privileged class; the working class being only considered in the arrangement as so much machinery. This involves perpetual and enormous *waste*, and the organization for the production of genuine utilities is only a secondary consideration. This waste lands the whole civilized world in a position of *artificial poverty*, which again debars men of all classes from satisfying their rational desires. Rich men are in slavery to Philistinism, poor men to penury. We can none of us have what we want, except (partially only) by making

prodigious sacrifices, which very few men can ever do. Before therefore we can so much as hope for any art, we must be free from this artificial poverty. When we are thus free, in my opinion, the natural instincts of mankind toward beauty and incident will take their due place: we shall *want* art, and since we shall be really wealthy, we shall be able to have what we want."

But in truth, as Morris well knew, the work of the Socialist party as a separate organization, whether acting as a united body or in detached and conflicting fragments, was for the time being already done. While Socialists were busy over their friendly or embittered contests as to methods, the course of events had already decided the question, and the policy of permeation had slowly become not so much an accepted theory as a realized fact. The great lock-out in the English coal industry, which was the most important social event of the autumn and winter months of 1893, came at once as a result and a symbol of a new spirit; and the ideas that underlay it, now formally expressed in the celebrated phrase, of the "living wage," were the first large outward manifestation of the beginnings of a new order of things, a new theory of human life. Almost for the first time, the cardinal doctrine began to take shape and assume consistence that the industrial and commercial system, no less than the political system of the country, was a means and not an end: and that the true end, for the sake of which alone these systems had any claim to respect or any right to existence, was the well-being of the nation, the humanization of human life. Such a humanized life, in which comfort and happiness should be alike within the reach of all, and in which all alike, rich and poor, should share, until

the names rich and poor might finally become alike obsolete in a common condition of civic and national well-being, had been from the first what Morris had striven after. He had joined the Socialist movement as a means, however indirect or uncertain, towards bringing about that end: and neither in the State Socialism of his earlier, nor in the Communal Socialism of his later theory, did he see anything beyond stages towards the birth of a final order. That final order might be described, for want of other terms, as the re-organization of the world under Socialism: but its actual nature, or the actual steps by which it was to be brought about, he perpetually insisted that it was impossible to lay out beforehand, or to forecast except by instinctive conjecture, and the imaginings of a prophet or a poet. As in Plato, the last words of philosophy were only to be expressed in the terms of a more or less conscious mythology. As in the days of the Hebrew prophets, the practical foundation of a kingdom of God on earth was to be wrought out by aid of that diffused imaginative ardour in which young men should see visions, and old men dream dreams. The visions of his own boyhood, the dreams of his own more advanced age, were but means towards expressing, and influences towards stimulating, the human movement itself, in which, through all doubts and discouragements, he had a permanent and a growing faith. No one insisted more strongly than he on the futility of any attempt to organize the future, or to lay down what would actually happen either in the progress towards the new age or in the final epoch of its attainment. In "The Dream of John Ball" he had shadowed out, in an allegorical setting of subtle and intricate beauty, the birth of a new world, seen, for one hour of intense spiritual exaltation, when the

mediæval rebel and mystic and the modern Socialist joined hands over the white poppy-flower in the doubtful dusk between moonset and dawn. In such a vision, the prophetic soul of the world, dreaming on things to come, ranges disembodied and unconfined. The dreams which the present may have of an elusive or dimly-conjectured future, no less than those which the past may once have had of a future that is not the present, must be no rational human forecast, but a tale told, like the Vision of Er in Plato's "Republic," by one neither alive nor dead. In "News from Nowhere" he had, with a reversion to a simpler and less august sphere of imagination, clothed his own dream of a new age in the innocent draperies of a romantic pastoral. But the dreamer of dreams, the poet and romance-writer who habitually moved in a strange world of his own, was also a man of keen-sighted practical intelligence. When called on for action, he could dismiss all that world of dreams, or only retain from it that deeper insight and that wider outlook which is forbidden to men not endowed with the more than human gift of imaginative insight. The letter to the Daily Chronicle on the Miners' Question, his last and most profound public utterance on the future of human society and the meaning of human life, is the voice of one who had lived both in Plato's cave and in the upper air, and who could adjust his eye to both. From that upper world of ideal art and creative imagination—of real things, as Plato would say—he could turn to the confused and perplexing movement of shadows in the cavern spoken and thought of by men as the actual world, and see breaking over the darkness no mere fluctuating glow from a fire behind the prisoners, but the glimmer of actual day.

This letter, headed "The Deeper Meaning of the

Struggle," and written on the 9th of November, ran as follows:

"May I be allowed to say a word in supplement to your paragraph about my opinion on the future of the fine arts? You rather imply that I am a pessimist on this matter. This is not the case; but I am anxious that there should be no illusions as to the future of art. I do not believe in the possibility of keeping art vigorously alive by the action, however energetic, of a few groups of specially gifted men and their small circle of admirers amidst a general public incapable of understanding and enjoying their work. I hold firmly to the opinion that all worthy schools of art must be in the future, as they have been in the past, the outcome of the aspirations of the people towards the beauty and true pleasure of life. And further, that now that democracy is building up a new order, which is slowly emerging from the confusion of the commercial period, these aspirations of the people towards beauty can only be born from a condition of practical equality of economical condition amongst the whole population. Lastly, I am so confident that this equality will be gained, that I am prepared to accept as a consequence of the process of that gain, the seeming disappearance of what art is now left us; because I am sure that that will be but a temporary loss, to be followed by a genuine new birth of art, which will be the spontaneous expression of the pleasure of life innate in the whole people.

"This, I say, is the art which I look forward to, not as a vague dream, but as a practical certainty, founded on the general well-being of the people. It is true that the blossom of it I shall not see; therefore I may be excused if, in common with other artists, I try to express myself through the art of to-day, which seems

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to us to be only a survival of the organic art of the past, in which the people shared, whatever the other drawbacks of their condition might have been. For the feeling for art in us artists is genuine, though we have to work in the midst of the ignorance of those whose whole life ought to be spent in the production of works of art (the makers of wares to wit) and of the fatuous pretence of those who, making no utilities, are driven to 'make-believe.'

"Yet if we shall not (those of us who are as old as I am) see the New Art, the expression of the general pleasure of life, we are even now seeing the seed of it beginning to germinate. For if genuine art be impossible without the help of the useful classes, how can these turn their attention to it if they are living amidst sordid cares which press upon them day in, day out? The first step, therefore, towards the new birth of art must be a definite rise in the condition of the workers; their livelihood must (to say the least of it) be less niggardly and less precarious, and their hours of labour shorter; and this improvement must be a general one, and confirmed against the chances of the market by legislation. But again this change for the better can only be realized by the efforts of the workers themselves. 'By us, and not for us,' must be their motto. That they are now finding this out for themselves and acting on it makes this year a memorable one indeed, small as is the actual gain which they are claiming. So I not only 'admit,' but joyfully insist on the fact 'that the miners are laying the foundation of something better.' The struggle against the terrible power of the profit-grinder is now practically proclaimed by them a matter of principle, and no longer a mere chance-hap business dispute, and though the importance of this is acknowledged here and there, I think it

is even yet underrated. For my part I look upon the swift progress towards equality as now certain; what these staunch miners have been doing in the face of such tremendous odds, other workmen can and will do; and when life is easier and fuller of pleasure, people will have time to look around them and find out what they desire in the matter of art, and will also have power to compass their desires. No one can tell now what form that art will take; but as it is certain that it will not depend on the whim of a few persons, but on the will of all, so it may be hoped that it will at last not lag behind that of past ages, but will outgo the art of the past in the degree that life will be more pleasurable from the absence of bygone violence and tyranny, *in spite* and not *because* of which our forefathers produced the wonders of popular art, some few of which time has left us."

CHAPTER XXI

LAST YEARS: THE KELMSCOTT CHAUCER

1894-1896

FOR about a year from the date of this remarkable letter Morris's life was so quietly busy from day to day that it has left almost no noticeable records. At the end of 1893 he had written to his mother the last letter of the long series which begins when he was an undergraduate at Oxford.

"Kelmscott House,
"Dec. 23rd, 1893.

"My dearest Mother,

"If I do not write now I shall not be in time for Christmas Day, so please consider this as Christmas Eve. I asked Henny to get you some pocket-handkerchiefs when she was in town. I hope you found them nice. The weather here is very fine this morning; I hope the sun is shining in on your room as it is on mine, as I suppose it is, for I think they both look nearly south. Jenny (the younger) is sitting with me reading a paper, and we are both enjoying the fine day.

"I got a letter from Henny yesterday inclosing a nice neck-kerchief for me; that will be good for me to

wear when the weather takes one of the sudden changes to cold, which come so often now. Thank you very much for it.

"Also, dearest mother, thank you very much for the handsome stands and dishes you were so kind as to send me; and the beautiful Dresden cups which I have always so much admired. And they are so pleasant to drink out of.

"We are all very well at present, and have pretty much got over our colds. I am looking forward to this Christmas as a quiet time, when there will be a lull in business matters: as I am hard at work, which I like very much.

"Dearest own mother, I send you my very best love and am

"Your most affectionate son,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

Mrs. Morris died in the following winter in her ninetieth year. "Tuesday I went to bury my mother," he wrote a few days afterwards: "a pleasant winter day with gleams of sun. She was laid in earth in the churchyard close by the house, a very pretty place among the great wych-elms, which, if it were of no use to her, was softening to us. Altogether my old and callous heart was touched by the absence of what had been so kind to me and fond of me. She was eighty-nine, and had been ill for nearly four years."

All that year Morris had been working hard at his press. But at Whitsuntide he took a holiday, and spent it in his favourite haunts of Northern France. He renewed there his delight in the indestructibly beautiful country, and the still lovely towns which seem as if they had grown out of the country like the fruit on a tree. The spring, too, was one of exceptional

beauty; the countryside was one flame of flowers, and "the nightingales," as Morris put it to Burne-Jones after he came back, "O my wig, they *were* peppering into it." The effect of the visit may be clearly traced in an address which he gave, soon after his return to England, to the Ancoats Brotherhood at Manchester. The subject he chose to speak upon was "Town and Country." The greater part of the address was delivered without notes, and of that portion no trustworthy record has been preserved. But for the earlier portion a few pages of manuscript had been carefully written out: and the fragment is notable for the clearness of its historical view, and for the temperate practical ideal, which, not without reasonable hope, it sets up for a near future. It has also a direct autobiographic value from its personal touches, not only in the allusion to the Oxford of his own youth, but where he speaks of the havoc wrought in country villages by the wasteful neglect, or still worse by the destructive attention, of the modern landowner. In both cases he had in his mind actual instances in his own neighbourhood on the upper Thames. But beyond all, it sums up, with the ripeness of long experience, the instincts and beliefs which guided him in his view of what kind of human life was desirable, and possible, and a duty, in a naturally beautiful world.

"Town and country are generally put in a kind of contrast, but we will see what kind of a contrast there has been, is, and may be between them; how far that contrast is desirable or necessary, or whether it may not be possible in the long run to make the town a part of the country and the country a part of the towns. I think I may assume that, on the one hand, there is nobody here so abnormally made as not to take a pleasure in green fields, and trees, and rivers, and

mountains, the beings, human and otherwise, that inhabit those scenes, and in a word, the general beauty and incident of nature: and that, on the other, we all of us find human intercourse necessary to us, and even the excitement of those forms of it which can only be had where large bodies of men live together.

"In the Roman times of the Empire, when the lands were cultivated almost wholly by well-organized slave labour with its necessary concomitant of brigandage and piracy in out-of-the-way places, I can't think that the countrysides were very pleasant places to live in; whereas the Roman city with its handsome buildings and gardens, its public baths, and other institutions of almost complete 'municipal socialism,' must have been very pleasant to well-to-do people, and perhaps, under the Empire at least, not quite intolerable to the proletarian, whose form of pauper relief did not include the prison system of the modern workhouse. In those days the town decidedly 'scores'; all the more as manufacture was, as its name implies, wholly a matter of handicraft. But the Roman city-system was pretty much swept away by the barbarism which took the place of the Empire. In this country, and wherever the people were not completely Romanized, the town was almost always merely the development of the agricultural district; it was the aggregation of the cultivators of the soil, and its freemen were always landowners, though mostly collective ones. In fact, for a long time after the Teutonic invasion which made this country England, there were no towns at all: the English clans lived in scattered homesteads along the side of the sea, or some river, or in clearings of the wild wood, as their Anglish, Jutish, or Saxon forefathers had done, and when they took a Romano-British town they had nothing better to do with it than to burn it

and let it be: though, when they got more civilized, the long extinct glories of Rome took some revenge for this destruction, by the impression which they made on the descendants of the destroyers: *e.g.*, an Anglo-Saxon poet of about the time of Athelstane wrote a poem on the ruins of an old Roman city which is as pathetic and beautiful as any lyric extant in any language, and you may, if you please, look on it as a forecast of the glories of the cities that were yet to come.

"Gradually, as civilization grew, the population thickened in certain places where the protection of the feudal lord—Baron, Bishop, or Abbot—made a market possible; and in short the growth of such places made our mediæval towns; though, as was like to be, where an old Roman town like York or London was still in existence, it was used as such a centre. But doubtless our mediæval towns were very small, smaller than our imagination of them pictures them to us; while on the other hand, the country villages were in many cases much larger than they are now. In fact in those days it was not so much the houses that made the town, as the constitution, the freemen and the guilds, which gradually grew into the Corporation. My familiarity with Oxford makes it easy to me to see a mediæval town of the more important kind: a place of some extent within its ancient walls, but the houses much broken by gardens and open spaces within the walls, and without them, a small estate it may be called, the communal property of the freemen. On the whole, then, the towns of the Middle Ages, in this country at least, were a part of the countrysides where they stood.

"In the Middle Ages even London was no more of a centre than Bristol or York, or indeed other

places now become almost extinct. But in the eighteenth century London was become very decidedly the centre of England, and now the distinction was not between the towns and the countrysides, but between London and the rest of the country, towns and all. And here properly begins the opposition of town to country. The only further development of this was the work of the Great Industries which created the big manufacturing town, a thing so entirely modern that even London, with all its enormity, has more relation to the cities of the past than these manufacturing towns have.

"On considering further the contrast between town and country we must be careful not to forget this special quality in London. For now we see that we have three things to deal with: London, the external beastliness and sordidness of which is in some degree compensated by its intellectual life; the commercial centres, which have no such compensation, and even in externals are far more horrible than London; and the country, which, instead of being the due fellow and helpmate of the towns and the Town, is a troublesome appendage, an awkward incident of town life, which, commercial or intellectual, is the real life of our epoch.

"The result of all this is the usual make-shift jumble which oppresses all our life in this epoch of strange and rapid change, when we have fallen into such grievous want of reasonable organization. Even London, though far better than the commercial towns, is sordidly vulgar in its rich quarters, noisome and squalid beyond word in its poor quarters. And the country —at this end of May I am not going to say that it is not beautiful—beautiful everywhere more or less where there are not many modern houses in sight. But I know the country well: and even for a rich man, a well-

to-do one at least, it shares in the make-shift stupidity of the epoch. Amongst all the superabundant beauty of leaf and flower, all the wealth of meadow, and acre, and hillside, it is *stingy*, O so stingy! In an ordinary way not an hour's work will be spent in taking away an ugly dead tree, in mending a shattered wall, setting a tottering vane straight (even if it be pulling down the roof-beam it is fastened to), in short in mending any defacement caused by wind and weather. Not a moment's consideration will be given as to whether the sightly material shall be used, if the unsightly one be a fraction cheaper for the time being. You can scarce have milk unless you keep a cow: you can't have vegetables unless you grow them yourself. I say this is the ordinary rule: it is true that when there is a rich squire, he does sometimes take some pains in beautifying his cottages, restoring his church, and so forth—with the result in *all* cases, that the village he has so dealt with has become as vulgar as Bayswater. Nor can I leave this subject of the outward aspect of the country without reminding you that through forty years of my life I have diligently and affectionately *noticed* the countryside in its smallest detail, and that the change for the worse in its aspect has been steady, and, especially within the last twenty years, startlingly rapid. Indeed, sometimes I feel selfishly glad to think that I shall not live to see the worst of it. Now you may well say that all this suffering to men who are in the habit of taking in impressions through the eyes is a due reward for our living on other people's earnings; for our suffering the human live-stock of the country to live such a wretched scanty existence as they do. True, and over true; but then why should *we* of the nineteenth century be so extra punished, when our forefathers were involved in the same sin?

"I take it that after all this is the case, that we feel it because it is at last tending to change—that we at last can do something to alter it. For this is what I want done in this matter of town and country: I want neither the towns to be appendages of the country, nor the country of the town; I want the town to be impregnated with the beauty of the country, and the country with the intelligence and vivid life of the town. I want every homestead to be clean, orderly, and tidy; a lovely house surrounded by acres and acres of garden. On the other hand, I want the town to be clean, orderly, and tidy; in short, a garden with beautiful houses in it. Clearly, if I don't wish this, I must be a fool or a dullard; but I do more—I claim it as the due heritage of the latter ages of the world which have subdued nature, and can have for the asking."

The great work of the Kelmscott Chaucer, which had been so long in preparation, was now fairly begun. "Chaucer getting on well; such lovely designs," is a note made by him in early spring. At the end of June he writes that he hopes to begin the actual printing within a month, and that, in about three months more, all the pictures, and nearly all the borders, will be ready for the whole of the Canterbury Tales. His delight in the growing row of volumes from his own press was unabated; and almost as great was his delight in giving copies to his more intimate friends. To Mr. Philip Webb, who had made some remonstrance against the extent of his generosity, he replied in the following letter:

"Kelmscott House,
"August 27th, '94.

"My dear Fellow,

"A traveller once entered a western hotel in America and went up to the clerk in his box (as

the custom is in that country) and ordered chicken for his dinner: the clerk, without any trouble in his face, put his hand into his desk, and drew out a derringer, wherewith he covered the newcomer and said in a calm historic voice: Stranger, you will not have chicken, you will have hash.

"This story you seem to have forgotten. So I will apply it, and say that you will have the Kelmscott books as they come out. In short you will have hash because it would upset me very much if you did not have a share in my 'larx.'

"As to the Olaf Saga, I had forgotten what you had had; chiefly I think because I did not prize the big-paper copies much. They were done in the days of ignorance, before the Kelmscott Press was, though hard on the time when it began.

"You see as to all these matters I do the books mainly for you and one or two others; the public does not really care about them a damn—which is stale. But I tell you I *want* you to have them, and finally you *shall*.

"Yours affectionately,
"WILLIAM MORRIS."

The autumn at Kelmscott was unusually quiet and happy. A certain degree of physical feebleness had now become his normal condition; he was seldom able to take long walks, or to spend whole days fishing; but he delighted in driving among the beautiful and familiar villages, and in shorter walks near home. It was on one of these walks, at the end of September, that when his companions perched on a gate to rest he sat down on the roadside with his legs straight out in front of him, saying, "I shall sit on the world." It would be difficult to convey to any one who did not

know him well the sense of mingled oddness and pathos that the words gave. Two days later, on a Sunday morning in Buscot Wood, he talked for some two hours on end on the principles of conducting business, with all his old keen insight and fertility of illustration. It was noticeable how he seemed to speak of the whole matter as, for himself, a past experience. One of the visitors at Kelmscott that week was Sir Edward Burne-Jones's little grandson, in whose favour Morris discarded any prejudices which he might have against children other than his own; for outside of his own family he was not a lover of children, and seldom took any notice of them. "As to Denis, he is the dearest little chap," he writes on the 3rd of October, "and as merry as the day is long —all that a gentleman of his age should be: everybody paid him the attention which he deserves." The Kelmscott holiday—during which, however, he was steadily at work designing borders and initials for the Chaucer—was prolonged till the beginning of November.

Soon after he returned to London the first elections were being held under the Local Government Act of 1894, which had been the latest and the most important achievement of Mr. Gladstone's administration. Morris was at once too preoccupied with his own work, and too disillusioned by his own experience, to feel any very deep interest in the matter. He did not go to Kelmscott to attend the inaugural parish meeting: in London he voted, but did no more. It was claimed for the Act by some enthusiasts that it reconstituted a framework of administration which was essentially that of the Middle Ages, and indeed went back in some points even beyond them. But to him it seemed too artificial, and too much encumbered

with those checks and balances which he hated, to be a source of any great hope. To Lady Burne-Jones, who was standing for election to the Parish Council at Rottingdean, he wrote on the 14th of December:

"Well now, I hope you will come in at the head of the poll; and I hope we shall beat our Bumbles. No one here can even guess how it will go. I daresay you think me rather lukewarm about the affair; but I am so depressed with the pettiness and timidity of the bill and the checks and counterchecks with which such an obvious measure has been hedged about, that all I can hope is that people will be able to keep up the excitement about it till they have got it altered somewhat. However, I shall go and vote for my twelve to-morrow morning, but I am lethargic and faint-hearted."

A week later he wrote again: "Many thanks for your book"—a brief, but admirably lucid printed address to the electors, explaining the scope of the Act and the nature of their rights and duties under it—"which is as good as the subject admits of, and for the first time makes me know something about the parish councils. Could you let me have two or three more? Now I congratulate you on the election, and I am really quite pleased that you beat the Bumbles. Here they beat us properly; though I didn't think, all things considered, that it was so bad, as we polled about half of what they did. You see all through London the middle class voted solid against us; which I think extremely stupid of them, as they might as well have got credit for supporting an improved administration. But you see they have an instinct, which they can't resist, against any progress in any direction. Item, they are very fearful lest the rates should be raised on them; as they certainly will be, whoever is in. We did better

with the Guardians' election, getting eight out of twelve."

At the beginning of 1895 Morris was carrying on all his multifarious occupations with unimpaired activity. Two presses were at work upon the Chaucer, and a third on smaller books. He was designing new paper-hangings; he was going on daily with the writing of new romances; he was completing, in collaboration with Mr. Magnússon, the translation of the Heimskringla which they had begun some three and twenty years before, and seeing it through the press for the Saga Library; and he was busily increasing the collection of illuminated manuscripts, chiefly of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which towards the end of his life became his chief treasures and gave him extraordinary delight. With the two presses at work it now seemed possible to finish the Chaucer in a year, and the panics into which he sometimes fell over its slow progress were greatly allayed. Among the smaller books which the third printing-press was turning out was the volume of selected poems of Coleridge. As to that book the following interesting passage occurs in a letter to Ellis when the contents were under discussion:

"As to the Coleridge-Keats question, you don't quite understand the position I think. Keats was a great poet who sometimes nodded: we don't want to make a *selection* of his works. Coleridge was a muddle-brained metaphysician, who by some strange freak of fortune turned out a few real poems amongst the dreary flood of inanity which was his wont. It is these real poems only that must be selected, or we burden the world with another useless book. Christabel only just comes in because the detail is fine; but nothing a hair's breadth worse must be admitted. There is absolutely no difficulty in choosing, because the

difference between his poetry and his drivel is so striking.

"I have been through the poems, and find that the only ones that have any interest for me are—1. Ancient Mariner, 2. Christabel, 3. Kubla Khan, and 4. the poem called Love. This would make a very little book, about 60 pages. There is one other which at least has some character, though rather tainted with Wordsworthianism; it is called The Three Graves, and is about as cheerful as the influenza. But then it is copyright; and at the best it would rather water down the good ones."

This volume, which finally included thirteen of Coleridge's poems, was the last of the series of reprints of modern poetry issued from the Kelmscott Press. It was not printed till a year later, having been postponed to another volume of selected poems of Herrick, for whom Morris had only a modified liking. "I like him better than I thought I should: I daresay we shall make a pretty book of it," was all he would say after looking through the "Hesperides" and "Noble Numbers" when the Kelmscott edition was in preparation.

In March he was buying manuscripts of Messrs. Quaritch and Leighton, and also at sales at Sotheby's and Christie's, and hungering after more, though indignant at the prices which were asked for them. "I bought," he writes to Ellis on the 19th, "for £15 10*s*. (much too dear) a Guldin Bibel (Augsburg, Hohenwang, *circa* 1470), a very interesting book which I much wanted. Also I bought for £25 (much too dear) a handsome 13th century French MS., but with little ornament, because it looked so handsome I hadn't the heart to send it back. The Mentelin Bible Quaritch bought for himself: 'tis a *very* fine book, and I lust after it, but can't afford it. The prices were preposterous.

There is a sale at Sotheby's this week, and I am just going up there, though I don't expect much in my way. I expect to meet Mr. James there with the two leaves from the Fitzwilliam."

On the 23rd he continues: "As the history of sales seems to interest you, hear a tale of the Phillips sale, of which to-day is the third day. Two books I bid for. A 13th century Aristotelian book with three very pretty initials, but imperfect top and tail; I put £15 on this with many misgivings as to my folly—hi! it fetched £50!! A really pretty little book, Gregory's Decretals, with four or five very tiny illuminations; I took a fancy to it and put £40 on it, expecting to get it for £25—ho! ! it fetched £96 ! ! ! Rejoice with me that I have got 82 MSS., as clearly I shall never get another. I have duly got my two leaves, and beauties they are."

The two leaves mentioned in these letters have an interesting history attached to them. In the previous July Morris had bought for upwards of £400—the highest price he had ever then paid for a book—an English Book of Hours written about 1300 in East Anglia, and containing the arms of Grey and Clifford. It was subsequently found that two missing leaves from this manuscript were in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. After long negotiations, it was agreed that Morris should sell his book to the museum for £200, and in return have the possession of it and of the two leaves belonging to it for his own lifetime. He had the leaves inserted in their places, and the manuscript remained one of his chief treasures. After his death it went to Cambridge, where it is now.

Notwithstanding the great rise in prices, a fine painted book was always worth more to Morris than it cost: and within the next two months he had added two

of the first rank to his collection. One of these was the so-called Huntingfield Psalter, a superb book of the end of the twelfth century. The other was the Tiptoft Missal, a work of the early fourteenth century, with illuminated borders throughout, of which the best are of unsurpassed beauty.

At the beginning of April he went down to Kelmscott. The Manor House, of which his tenure had hitherto been precarious, had, by an arrangement made the month before, passed practically, though not formally, into his ownership.

"It is just a month," he wrote to his daughter on his arrival, "since I was here, and there is a great change in the grass, which shows green everywhere and looks beautiful. As to the flowers, there are not many of them actually out. The snowdrops nearly but not quite gone; a few purple crocuses, but of course not open this sunless day. The daphne very full of blossom. Many daffodils nearly out, but only two or three quite. The beautiful hepatica, which I used to love so when I was a quite little boy, in full bloom, both pink and blue: the hyacinths not out yet, but more advanced than our London (outdoor) ones. Several of the crown imperials show for bloom; but are not due yet, nor are the yellow tulips. There are a few primroses, but not many; but the garden with all its springing green looks lovely.

"As to birds, I have heard very little singing except the rooks, who are all agog: I suppose the cold weather has belated the breeding season.

"Giles has patched up the punt, and is sanguine about its holding water: so am I; but think the water may be rather inside than out—however we shall see. There has been a little flood since I was here; which will do good. The house is as clean as a new pin."

By the end of the month he had cleared off long arrears of translation and romance-writing by finishing his Heimskringla and the romance of "The Water of the Wondrous Isles," and was working harder than ever for the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings. The main object of their defence at the moment was Peterborough Cathedral.

It was one of the churches which had been his earliest admirations; he had known it in his boyhood, and felt towards it as though he had been one of its own builders. One of the most brilliant pieces of imaginative description in "The Earthly Paradise" is put in the mouth of a wanderer who had seen that magnificent western front rising. It occurs in the introductory verses to the tale of "The Proud King."

> —I, who have seen
> So many lands, and midst such marvels been,
> Clearer than these abodes of outland men
> Can see above the green and unburnt fen
> The little houses of an English town,
> Cross-timbered, thatched with fen-reeds coarse and brown,
> And high o'er these, three gables, great and fair,
> That slender rods of columns do upbear
> Over the minster doors, and imagery
> Of kings, and flowers no summer field doth see,
> Wrought on those gables. Yea, I heard withal
> In the fresh morning air, the trowels fall
> Upon the stone, a thin noise far away;
> For high up wrought the masons on that day,
> Since to the monks that house seemed scarcely well
> Till they had set a spire or pinnacle
> Each side the great porch. . . . I am now grown old,
> Yet is it still the tale I then heard told
> Within the guest-house of that minster-close
> Whose walls, like cliffs new-made, before us rose.

A long and bitter controversy was carried on between the Dean and Chapter on one side and the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings on the

other. It ended inconclusively; and the work proposed by Mr. Pearson has in the main been carried out. But here as elsewhere the real result of the Society's action is to be sought, not so much in what they failed to prevent, as in the effect which their vigilant and jealous criticism had on the manner in which the work was carried out.

Equally strong was Morris's feeling in another matter on which that same spring he helped to excite public interest, that of the injuries done to Epping Forest, the playground of his own childhood, by the Conservators. Alarm had been aroused by the amount of "restoration" that had been carried out in it for some years by lopping and felling, as well as by changes which smoothed down the characteristic wildness of the Forest. The strangely romantic aspect of the dense hornbeam thickets, the plashy dells, and the rough cattle-tracks winding among the hollies and beeches of the upper ground, had been already impaired and was in further danger: and Morris was roused to alarm and indignation by the prospect of seeing one of the last fragments of ancient England turned into a modern park. On the 7th of May he spent a long day in walking through the Forest with a party of four or five friends. He was relieved to find that the evil had been exaggerated. Here and there damage had undoubtedly been done; but whole tracts of the Forest remained as wild and beautiful as ever; and he drew little but pleasure from the visit to the glades and coppices, every yard of which had been familiar to him as a boy.

His anxieties about the Kelmscott Chaucer were not yet over. At the end of May the discovery was made that a number of the printed sheets had become discoloured, owing to some failure in the exact pre-

paration of the ink. Fortunately it proved that the yellow stain was fugitive, and could be removed by careful bleaching in sunlight without affecting the colour of the ink. But it was not till late in the autumn that he could fully satisfy himself that the stain had been permanently removed, and might not reappear.

"The check of the Chaucer flattens life for me somewhat," he writes on the 19th of July, "but I am going hard into the matter, and have found out the real expert in the matter of inks and oils, and in about a fortnight hope to know the worst of it.

"On Wednesday I went a journey into Suffolk for the S.P.A.B., a pretty journey all through my native Essex. The upland pastures were all burnt up, and were cocoa-nut matting; but the corn did not look bad: they were cutting oats in many places, which should not be ready till the end of August. Blythborough was what we went to see; once a good town in the Middle Ages, now a poor remnant of a village with the ruins of a small religious house and a huge 15th century church built of flint after that country manner: a very beautiful church, full of interest, with fine wood-work galore, a lovely painted roof, and some stained glass; the restorations not much noticeable from the inside: floor of various bricks, a few seats in the nave, all ancient, similar ones in the chancel, and the rest open space. We were cumbered of course with the parson, since we came to advise him, but I much enjoyed myself and sat about while Turner did his measurings, etc. The place is close to Southwold on the little tidal river Bly at the end of the marshland valley, where they were busy with their second hay crop. Little spits of the sandy low upland covered with heather and bracken run down to the marsh, and make a strange landscape

of it; a mournful place, but full of character. I was there some twenty-five years ago; and found I remembered it perfectly.

"By the way, there was a review of the Wood"—his romance of "The Wood beyond the World," which had been issued from the Kelmscott Press the year before, and of which an ordinary edition had recently been published—"in last week's Spectator, which was kind and polite, but amused me very much by assuming that it was a Socialist allegory of Capital and Labour! It was written with such an air of cock-certainty that I thought people might think that I had told the reviewer myself; so I wrote a note to explain that he was wrong."

During this summer the gradual failure of Morris's strength became clearly noticeable. Languor insensibly stole over him. "It is sad," Sir Edward Burne-Jones wrote in autumn, "to see his enormous vitality diminishing." He was less ready for any active expeditions, and began to suffer from sleeplessness. In summer mornings it had long been a luxury with him to be awakened at dawn by the first birds and then fall asleep again; but now that first waking was not always succeeded by a second sleep, and he often, even when summer passed into winter, got up at three or four o'clock and sat down to write at one of his prose tales in order to pass the time. He found that the clipping of a yew dragon which had been for some years in progress under the gable of the tapestry-room at Kelmscott was too fatiguing a task for him. His country walks became shorter in their range, and fishing was almost given up. "Ellis was with us for three days," he writes at the beginning of August, "and took me fishing every day: I did not much want to go, but I daresay it did me good." Even

writing began to be a fatiguing task. "I am worn out," he says on the 13th of August, "with writing a long letter to the Athenæum about the tapestry at South Kensington Museum, and so cannot attempt to fill up this sheet." A week later, however, he was well enough to make his annual expedition to the White Horse. Lady Burne-Jones, who was staying at Kelmscott, was of the party. "Topsy looks very happy, and is so sweet down here," she wrote home. "The garden is enchanting with flowers, one mass of them, and all kept in beautiful order. The trees and bushes are of course grown in the last nine years, and the whole place is leafier; otherwise I feel as if I had been here last week, the place is so little changed—but I feel the added years in Janey and Topsy and me, so that it seems like visiting something that is not quite real."

"The garden looks rich and pleasant," Morris himself had written at the beginning of the month, "though the autumn flowers (for we are practically in autumn now) are so much less delightful than those of spring and early summer. One pleasant walk is cut off from us at present, the one up to Buscot Wood. It is guarded by a dragon; *i.e.*, a savage Bull; we (Jenny and I) on Friday last were just going into the first Berkshire field when the lock-keeper stopped us and told us awesome stories about the said beast; so we abstained. We, safe on the other side of the river, saw the gentleman afterwards, as he walked away from his harem, sometimes throwing up his head and bellowing, sometimes faring along with that expressive half inward growl, which is so interesting to hear when you *are* on the other side of the Thames. We were both of us compelled to admit that he was a gallant-looking neat—red-roan of colour."

The lock-keeper's cottage, a pretty but tumble-down building of grey stone, walls and roof, was about to be rebuilt by the Thames Conservancy; and one of the last instances in which Morris was able to ward off encroachments on the beauty of the riverside was when he now prevented, by a temperate and dignified expostulation, the replacement of the old silver-grey roof which lay in sight of his own house by one of blue Welsh slate. At his urgent instances, too, the Conservators consented to give instructions that the men who cut the weeds on the river should spare the flowering plants on the banks as much as possible. But beyond his own immediate reach he had to confess with despondency that it seemed useless to struggle against the pervading flood of evil change in that lovely region. "I was thinking just now," he writes from Kelmscott at the end of August, "how I have wasted the many times when I have been 'hurt' and (especially of late years) have made no sign, but swallowed down my sorrow and anger, and nothing done! Whereas if I had but gone to bed and stayed there for a month or two and declined taking any part in life, as indeed on such occasions I have felt very much disinclined to do, I can't help thinking that it might have been very effective. Perhaps you remember that this game was tried by some of my Icelandic heroes, and seemingly with great success. But I admit that it wants to be done well.

"It was a most lovely afternoon when I came down here, and I was prepared to enjoy the journey from Oxford to Lechlade very much: and so I did; but woe's me! when we passed by the once lovely little garth near Black Bourton, I saw all my worst fears realized; for there was the little barn we saw being mended, the wall cut down and finished with a zinked

iron roof. It quite sickened me when I saw it. That's the way all things are going now. In twenty years everything will be gone in this countryside, which twenty years ago was so rich in beautiful building: and we can do nothing to help it or mend it. The world had better say, 'Let us be through with it and see what will come after it!' In the meantime I can do nothing but a little bit of Anti-Scrape—*sweet to eye while seen.* Now that I am grown old and see that nothing is to be done, I half wish that I had not been born with a sense of romance and beauty in this accursed age."

But a week afterwards he had so far rallied from this fit of depression as to be in great excitement over the new scheme for the folio edition of his own "Sigurd the Volsung," for which Burne-Jones had just agreed to design at least five and twenty pictures. "I am afire to see the new designs," he wrote to Burne-Jones, "which I have no doubt *will* do—and as to the age, that be blowed!"

During the winter he still went on lecturing from time to time as his strength allowed. On the 30th of October, at the request of Mr. Hines, a Radical and Socialist chimney-sweep in Oxford, with whom he had a long-standing acquaintance, dating from the early days of the Socialist movement, he gave an address to inaugurate the newly-founded Oxford Socialist Union. A month later he spoke—"to the point and impressively," a hearer says—at the funeral of Sergius Stepniak, in the foggy drizzle outside Waterloo Station. During December he lectured twice in London, on English architecture and on Gothic illustrations to printed books. The latter lecture, delivered at the Bolt Court Technical School, was the last he gave with his old vigour. On the 3rd of January he attended the New

Year's meeting of the Social Democratic Federation at the Holborn Town Hall, and made there a short, but noble and touching speech on behalf of unity. Two days afterwards, he gave the last of his Sunday evening lectures at Kelmscott House. The subject of the lecture was "One Socialist Party." "Could not sleep at night," he writes in his diary the next day; "got up and worked from 1 to 4 at Sundering Flood." On the 31st of January he attended a meeting, at the Society of Arts, of the Society for Checking the Abuses of Public Advertising, and made a brief speech in support of the first resolution moved. He never spoke in public again after this. On the day before, he had been for the last time at the weekly meeting of the Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings. As he walked up Buckingham Street after the meeting, a friend ventured to observe, noting his obvious weakness, that it was the worst time of the year. "No, it ain't," he returned, "it's a very fine time of the year indeed: I'm getting old, that's what it is."

On the 27th of November he had written from Rottingdean, where he had gone for a few days by himself, to Lady Burne-Jones:

"To-day has been quite mild, and I started out at ten and went to a mountain with some barns on the top, and a chalk pit near (where you took me one hot evening in September, you remember), and I walked on thence a good way, and should have gone further, but prudence rather than weariness turned me back. They were ploughing a field in the bottom with no less than ten teams of great big horses: they were knocking off for their bever just as I came on them, and seemed very jolly, and my heart went out to them, both men and horses.

"I brought my University book"—this was Mr.

Rashdall's "Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages," a work for which he expressed the highest respect and admiration—"down with me, but deserted it yesterday afternoon for Jane Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice,' which I have just finished. I am getting better here, but was better on Sunday for the matter of that. The doctor called on Monday, and told me it was good for me not to be victimized by bores, and that I had better not be: this seems to me such very good advice, that I pass it on to you; but am just struck with fear that you may begin the practice of it on me. Anyhow I will be cautious enough of it not to make this letter longer."

In December the Chaucer was making such good progress that he began to design a binding for it. Even here he was confronted by the difficulty of obtaining sound material. "Leather is not good now," he said in talking about this matter; "what used to take nine months to cure is done in three. They used to say, what's longest in the tanyard stays least time in the market: but that no longer holds good. *People don't know how to buy now; they'll take anything.*" The truth in this last sentence goes very deep. The manufacturer — so Morris perpetually urged—is but the servant of the public, and the buyer is equally responsible with the seller (each, he would add, doing their best to cheat the other) for a state of things which floods all markets with cheap dishonest work.

As the Chaucer approached completion, Morris became nervous about anything which threatened, however remotely, to delay it. "I'd like it finished to-morrow," he answered, when asked how early a date would satisfy him for its appearance: "every day beyond to-morrow that it isn't done is one too

many." In his own library one day before Christmas, a visitor looking over the sheets that were lying on the table remarked on the added beauty of those sheets following the Canterbury Tales where picture-pages face one another in pairs. Morris took alarm. "Now don't you go saying that to Burne-Jones," he said, "or he'll be wanting to do the first part over again; and the worst of that would be, that he'd want to do all the rest over again, because the other would be so much better, and then we should never get done, but always be going round and round in a circle." The last of the eighty-seven pictures was finished two days after Christmas. In the same week Morris had begun to write the story of "The Sundering Flood," the last of his prose romances. During that December he had enriched his collection of manuscripts by two splendid examples of the thirteenth century, for which he paid upwards of a thousand pounds; one a folio Bible, in three volumes, of French work of the end of the century, and the other a Psalter of slightly earlier date, variously ascribed to Rouen or Beauvais, and richly adorned with miniatures in the finest manner of that fine period.

With the turn of the year the weakness that had been gaining on him for some months became much more pronounced. He now suffered from an exhausting cough; he was losing flesh noticeably, and sleeplessness became a regular feature of his nights. He wrote a little of "The Sundering Flood" every day, and did work nearly every day for initials and borders for the Kelmscott Press editions of "The Well at the World's End" and "The Earthly Paradise." But his working hours became shorter and shorter. In February another visit to Rottingdean was tried, but he was languid and made no improvement. On his re-

turn he was induced to consult Sir William Broadbent. The existence of diabetes and other complications was confirmed, but not to a degree which implied immediate danger. There were fluctuations and slight improvements followed by relapses, but on the whole he was now steadily losing ground, and as his weakness increased, losing heart. "I don't feel any better: so weak," is a pathetic note in his diary of work at the end of February: and a journey round his garden at Hammersmith was now sufficient to tire him. The daily progress of the Chaucer was the one thing that kept up his interest. It was now within sight of completion. The last three of the wood-blocks had been brought him on the 21st of March. The Easter holidays in April, "four mouldy Sundays in a mouldy row, the press shut and Chaucer at a standstill," were almost more than he could bear. But his eagerness over the acquisition of fresh manuscripts was unabated. In March he had bought from Mr. W. A. S. Benson a fine folio Testament of the twelfth century, which he discovered, to his great delight, had belonged to the same religious house near Dijon as a Josephus which he had acquired a few months before. Towards the end of April he was roused to great excitement by news of a splendid twelfth-century English Bestiary, containing one hundred and six miniatures, which was offered for sale by Mr. Rosenthal of Munich. He at once began to negotiate for it: as Mr. Rosenthal would not take the risk of sending it on approval, Mr. Cockerell went to Stuttgart, where the book was, with full powers. It turned out to be even finer than had been expected; even the British Museum possessed nothing in Bestiaries equal to it. A contemporary note in the book itself recorded that it had been given in the year 1187 to Worksop Priory, together with

other books, by one Philip, Canon of Lincoln. Both writing and miniatures, with which it is profusely illustrated, were of the best and most characteristic English style of the period. Mr. Cockerell bought it for £900, and brought it back with him to Kelmscott, where Morris had gone for what turned out to be his last visit. He was delighted with it beyond measure.

From Kelmscott he wrote, during this visit, to Lady Burne-Jones;

"I cannot say that I think I am better since I saw you a week ago; and I hope I am no worse; only you see down in this deep quiet, away from the excitements of business, and callers, and doctors, one is rather apt to brood, and I fear that I have made myself very disagreeable at times.

"However, I am going on with my work, both drawing and writing, though but little of the latter, as Walker was with me Saturday and Sunday, to my great comfort. Ellis comes on Saturday, and will stay till I go back. Here everything is as beautiful as it can be: up to now the season is a fine one, the grass well grown and well coloured; the apple-blossom plentifuller than we have ever had it here. The weather with lots of sun, though I should have preferred that alternated with a few warm showers instead of the veil of cold cloud which has no promise of rain in it (like Hud's dry cloud that hung over the city of Sheddad, the son of Ad the Greater) and withering wind with it.

"However I have enjoyed the garden very much, and should never be bored by walking about and about in it. And though you think I don't like music, I assure you that the rooks and the blackbirds have been a great consolation to me. We are still between the flowers, for nothing stirs this beastly weather. The thing that was the pleasingest surprise was the

raspberry-canes, which Giles has trellised up neatly, so that they look like a mediæval garden: they are thriving splendidly.

"Moreover Hobbs has been re-thatching a lot of his sheds and barns, which sorely needed it, and used to keep me in a fever of terror of galvanized iron: so that this time at least there is some improvement in the village."

At Kelmscott he had written the last of his contributions to the literature of Socialism, a brief article for the May-Day number of "Justice." When he returned to London on the 6th of May he found that all the picture sheets of the Chaucer had been printed off, and the block of the title-page was ready for approval. The printing was completed two days later. At the end of May he went for a few days to Mr. Wilfrid Blunt at Newbuildings Place; he was then too weak to work, but could enjoy the beautiful West Sussex country. He returned to London on the 30th: and on the 2nd of June the first two copies of the Chaucer came from the binder, one for himself and the other for Burne-Jones. Morris's own copy is now in the library of Exeter College. The other was given on the 3rd of June by Sir Edward Burne-Jones to his daughter for her birthday. "I want particularly to draw your attention," Burne-Jones wrote of the volume when complete, and the feeling is one which Morris himself fully and cordially shared, "to the fact that there is no preface to Chaucer, and no introduction, and no essay on his position as a poet, and no notes, and no glossary; so that all is prepared for you to enjoy him thoroughly."

Thus the work which had been for just five years in project, and for three years and four months in actual preparation and execution, was brought to a conclusion.

The printing had occupied a year and nine months. Besides Burne-Jones's eighty-seven pictures, it contains a full-page woodcut title, fourteen large borders, eighteen borders or frames for the pictures, and twenty-six large initial words. All of these, besides the ornamented initial letters large and small, were designed by Morris himself, as was the white pigskin binding with silver clasps, executed at Mr. Cobden-Sanderson's bindery by Mr. Douglas Cockerell, in which the Kelmscott Chaucer receives its complete form.

CHAPTER XXII

ILICET

It was his last finished work. His weakness was already so great that the ambiguous reports of professional advisers could no longer conceal the fact that the end was not far off. He still, on days when the depression of his illness was less severe, cherished the hope of going on with the great Froissart, which was to be a sister volume to the Chaucer, and with the sumptuous folio edition of his own "Sigurd the Volsung." The series of woodcuts for the "Sigurd" from drawings by Sir Edward Burne-Jones had been already planned, and a number of designs for them made. In May Burne-Jones, though with but little hope that the work could ever be carried out, had offered to increase the number of these pictures to forty. The proposal had been joyfully accepted by Morris, and roused him for a little into fresh life. His daily work was now mainly designing borders for the "Sigurd," and he still was able to do a little at it every day. Before either of these large works, however, another small book was to have been printed, which would have been one of the most beautiful products of the Kelmscott Press. This was the tale of "The Hill of Venus," to be written in prose by himself and adorned by the twelve

exquisite designs made by Burne-Jones for the story nearly thirty years before.

At the beginning of July he completed his collection of painted books by a Psalter which for style, colour, and execution was the finest of them all. He gave it the name of the Windmill Psalter from a windmill which was prominent in the design upon the page next following the "Beatus." This book, a folio of about the year 1270, had been acquired, with several leaves missing, about five and twenty years previously, by Mr. Henry Hucks-Gibbs, now Lord Aldenham. Four of the missing leaves were, however, extant, and had been sold many years before by Ellis to Mr. Fairfax Murray, who after much solicitation had consented to exchange them with Morris for five sheets of drawings on vellum by an Italian master of the fifteenth century. Lord Aldenham's book was exhibited among the English manuscripts collected and shown in the summer of 1896 by the Society of Antiquaries in their rooms at Burlington House. To that exhibition Morris also lent the four leaves in question, together with six of the best of his own English painted books. They were placed next the book to which they had originally belonged. When Morris went with Burne-Jones on the 5th of June to see the collection, the relationship of the two portions of the book was obvious. "We looked," Morris writes exultantly the next day to Ellis, "and lo! there was no doubt—there was the book with the due hiatuses. And now, whatten a book was that, my man? Why, as soon as I saw its second leaf, I recognized it as the book which I saw in your shop in Bond Street, and which I have talked so much to you about, and which you told me you sold, or some one else sold, to Hucks-Gibbs. Are you thunderstruck? But now the question is, How am I

to get hold of the Hucks-Gibbs 'fragment'? Perhaps you can suggest some course of procedure. Come up and talk about it."

Finally, after much debate, Morris wrote to Lord Aldenham explaining the case, and offering him £1,000 for the Psalter. He was out of town; and the three days that passed before his answer came were spent by Morris in much agitation. At last the answer came. "Letter in morning," Morris notes in his diary, "from Lord A., kind and friendly, *will* let me have the book. Sent Cockerell after it with cheque in afternoon, and it came back at 4: a great wonder."

There were two other books in the exhibition at Burlington House which he coveted as much or even more. One was the famous Apocalypse from the Archbishop's Library at Lambeth, "a book with the most amazing design and beauty in it." This was, of course, unattainable. But the other was in private ownership; it was a Psalter, even finer than Lord Aldenham's, belonging to the Duke of Rutland: "*such* a book! *my* eyes! and I am beating my brains to see if I can find any thread of an intrigue to begin upon, so as to creep and crawl toward the possession of it." He entered on negotiations, and offered a much higher sum than he had paid for the Windmill Psalter, but in vain; and this last pleasure was denied him.

For the greater part of June he had been, by medical advice, staying at Folkestone to try the effects of change of air, but without any beneficial result. His nervous prostration had by this time become very great. The news which he learned on the way down to Folkestone of the death of his old friend, John Henry Middleton, completely broke him down. "I did like him very much," he wrote mournfully to Lady Burne-Jones a few days afterwards: "we had a deal to talk about,

and much in common as to our views of things and the world, and his friendliness to his friends was beyond measure." But he enjoyed strolling about the harbour and walking on the Leas, and on one very fine bright day he managed to go to Boulogne and back with Mr. Cockerell. Relays of friends came down to keep him company: Sir Edward and Lady Burne-Jones, Mr. Ellis, Mr. Cockerell, Mr. Wilfrid Blunt, Mr. E. Walker, Mr. Catterson-Smith. On the 24th of June the first fully bound copy of his Chaucer was brought down to him by Mr. Douglas Cockerell, and was approved by him as in every way satisfactory. On his return to London early in July, he went to report himself to Sir William Broadbent. "He thought me a little better (I'm not), and ordered me a sea voyage."

The voyage fixed on was one to Norway, on an Orient liner which was making a special trip as far as Spitzbergen for the solar eclipse of that year. It was hoped that the keen northern sea air might prove beneficial, and that the historic associations of Norway might serve to alleviate the monotony of the voyage. Much to his satisfaction, his old friend, Mr. John Carruthers, the companion of other journeys in previous years, found himself at the last moment able to go with him. They started on the 22nd of July. The last entry in his diary had been made on the 20th.

But the voyage, whether wisely counselled or not, was not happy either in its progress or in its results. His beloved books and manuscripts had to be left behind: he suffered from almost constant weariness and restlessness: he was not able to make any excursions inland, and the melancholy of the firths struck a chill on his spirits in spite of fine weather and warm

suns. Off Bergen a last gleam of the Viking spirit came over him as he gazed on "the old hills which the eyes of the old men looked on when they did their best against the Weirds." But his own fighting days were over.

He stayed at Vadsö near the North Cape for the week in which the steamer went on to Spitzbergen and returned. On the morning of the 18th of August he arrived again at Tilbury, with only one anxious wish, to get away to Kelmscott as soon as possible. But his illness took a serious turn a day or two afterwards, and the doctors had to forbid his removal. He never left Hammersmith again. He was so weak now that he had to dictate the few letters he wrote, though on some days he did a little designing of letters and ornaments for the Press. To his old friend, Mr. Thomas Wardle of Leek, who had written pressing him to try the effect of rest and the pure Derbyshire air at Swainslow, he wrote as follows, the body of the letter being dictated and the signature added feebly in his own hand:

"Kelmscott House,
"August 26th, 1896.

"My dear Wardle,

"It is very kind of you to invite me to share in your paradise, and I am absolutely delighted to find another beautiful place which is still in its untouched loveliness. I should certainly have accepted your invitation, but I am quite unable to do so, for at present I cannot walk over the threshold, being so intensely weak. The Manifold is the same river, is it not, which you carried me across on your back, which situation tickled us so much that, owing to inextin-

guishable laughter, you very nearly dropped me in. What pleasant old times those were.

"With all good wishes and renewed thanks,

"I am yours very truly,

"WILLIAM MORRIS."

On the 8th of September, with some difficulty, he dictated the last dozen lines of "The Sundering Flood" to Mr. Cockerell, and seemed to find relief in having been able to bring it to a conclusion. The last letter he had been able to write himself was one of a few lines to Lady Burne-Jones, who was at Rottingdean, on the 1st of September. "Come soon," it ends, "I want a sight of your dear face."

During his absence two more books had been issued from the Kelmscott Press. One of them, "Laudes Beatæ Mariæ Virginis," consisted of a series of Latin poems to the Virgin, from an English Psalter of the early thirteenth century which was one of the manuscripts in his own possession, and one of extreme beauty as regards both writing and ornament. For the first time he had, in this beautiful little volume, tried the experiment of printing in three colours. The result was entirely successful, and the effect of the red was much enhanced by the fine blue which he used as the third colour. The other book was the first volume of a sumptuous eight-volume edition of "The Earthly Paradise." A second volume was issued in September. The remaining six, all of which include borders and half borders specially designed by him and not used in any other book, were completed and issued after his death. In these posthumous volumes, however, there are three borders which had been designed in Morris's manner by Mr. Catterson-Smith; these being the only instances of any letter, border,

or ornament (with the exception of a little Greek type which occurs in two books) printed at the Kelmscott Press and not actually designed by Morris himself and drawn with his own hand.

Among the projects that had dated from the earliest days of the Press were two which various circumstances had from time to time put off, and which were now once more much in his mind. One of these was the printing of a selection of mediæval English lyrical poetry. He had discussed the plan of such a book with Mr. Wyatt when they were working together at "Beowulf," and just before he started on the voyage to Norway Mr. Wyatt had sent him a list of early English poems for consideration. But he was too weak then to do anything with it. The other proposed volume was one which lay even nearer his heart; it was a volume of the Border Ballads, which had been his delight since boyhood, and which he often maintained to be the highest achievement in poetry which the language had to show. This also had been planned years before; and early in 1894 he had been discussing the thorny question of a text with Ellis. He had persuaded himself that it was possible to form such a text by selection from the different versions. "You see," he said, "no one version has more authority than another; it is a matter of literary merit;"—and no doubt were the formation of such a text at all possible, it would have had its best chances of success in his hands. During this autumn, when he was too ill to do anything else, he amused himself by having the ballads read aloud to him and beginning to form his own version. Mr. Ellis, who was daily with him, and who did most of this work for him, was well aware that the selection could never be completed, and no longer argued the question with him.

Among the larger unexecuted projects which had at one time or another been formed for the Kelmscott Press, the Shakespeare in three folio volumes, which had been announced in 1893, had been definitely abandoned, and the reprint of the English Bible of 1611, though not formally given up, had receded into a problematical future. The "Sigurd" and the Froissart would have been the work of at least two years; and after them the next work planned was to have been a volume of even greater magnificence than the Chaucer, a folio edition of Malory's "Morte d'Arthur," for which Sir Edward Burne-Jones was to design at least a hundred pictures. With the added experience and increased technical skill now available, it should have eclipsed even the Chaucer in splendour of design and beauty of execution. Of other items in the mass of work which lay before the Press, an account is given in the last book issued from it before it was finally wound up in March, 1898. In that little volume Mr. Cockerell has added to Morris's own account of his aims in founding and conducting the Press, a description of its inception and progress, and an annotated list of the books printed at it, with a fullness, lucidity, and accuracy which leave nothing to be desired.

Morris himself was now known by his friends to be a dying man. On his return from Norway congestion of the left lung had set in, which remained persistent, and the general organic degeneration made steady progress. His old fear of death had long left him, but his desire to live remained almost as strong as ever till he became too weak to desire anything. As the power of self-control slackened, the emotional tenderness which had always been so large an element in his nature became more habitually visible. On one of her latest visits, Lady Burne-Jones tells me, he broke

into tears when something was said about the hard life of the poor. He had a longing to hear for the last time some of that older music for which he had so great an admiration. Mr. Arnold Dolmetsch brought down a pair of virginals to Kelmscott House, and played to him several pieces by English composers of the sixteenth century. A pavan and galliard by William Byrd were what Morris liked most. He broke into a cry of joy at the opening phrase, and after the two pieces had been repeated at his request, was so deeply stirred that he could not bear to hear any more.

The weariness of that September was also alleviated by the thoughtful kindness of Mr. R. H. Benson, who took to him, one after another, several of the priceless thirteenth-century manuscripts from the Dorchester House library: among them a Psalter written at Amiens, and a book even more fascinating to him, a "Bible Historiée et Vies des Saints" containing, besides initial and marginal ornament of unsurpassed wealth and beauty of invention, no less than one thousand and thirty-four pictures, beginning with the Creation and concluding with the coming of Antichrist and the end of the world, *toutes ymaginées et ētitulées et p escripture exposées*. This last book he had by him for a week, and though he was too weak to look at it for more than a few minutes together, he always went back to it with fresh delight.

During the last weeks he was attended, beyond his own family, by the untiring devotion of his friends. Miss Mary De Morgan brought to this last service all the skill born of long experience, and the intelligent sympathy of an affection which Morris had for many years cordially returned. Sir Edward and Lady Burne-Jones, Mr. Webb, and Mr. Ellis were with him almost daily.

Mr. Cockerell was ceaseless in his zeal and care; and Mr. Emery Walker nursed him with the patience and tenderness of a woman. On the morning of Saturday the 3rd of October, between eleven and twelve o'clock, he died quietly and without visible suffering.

No man on earth dies before his day: and least of all can the departure be called premature of a man whose life had been so crowded in activity and so rich in achievement. To one judging by the work done in it, his working day was longer and ampler than often falls to the lot of our brief and pitiable human race. But the specific reasons why that life was not protracted beyond its sixty-third year are not difficult to assign. On the paternal side of his family there was a marked neurotic and gouty tendency. Himself of powerful physique, deep-chested, sound-lunged, big-hearted, he yet carried in him that family weakness, which was developed under the pressure of an immensely busy life. On a constitution made sensitive by gout, the exposure of the years of the Socialist crusade, when he had perpetually spoken in the open air in all weathers, and in the worse than open air of indoor meetings, and had often neglected or forgone proper food and rest, told with fatal effect. "I have no hesitation," his family doctor writes to me, "in saying that he died a victim to his enthusiasm for spreading the principles of Socialism." Yet this was only the special form that, in those years, his unceasing and prodigious activity had taken: and these words may be enlarged or supplemented by those of an eminent member of the same profession: "I consider the case is this: the disease is simply being William Morris, and having done more work than most ten men."

"Remembering those early years," says Sir Edward

Burne-Jones, "and comparing them with the last in which I knew him, the life is one continuous course. His earliest enthusiams were his latest. The thirteenth century was his ideal period then, and it was still the same in our last talks together; nor would he ever wander from his allegiance. The changes that have come over later impressions about art passed beside him or under him with scarcely any notice."

With all the patience and conciliatoriness of his later years, he remained absolutely unshaken in his loyalty to his old opinions and to his old associates. "He was most tolerable with the opinions of others," are the quaint but touching words of one of his colleagues of the Socialist League. But his own opinions were never withdrawn or concealed; and to the last he could be roused to anger by any slighting words about things for which his own admiration was a fixed article of faith. Among the younger men who came about him in these years were some who, full of the latest ideas and methods in painting, were ready to disparage the work of Burne-Jones. One of them ventured, one day at Kelmscott House, to give some expression of this disparagement, fancying perhaps that Morris might not find it wholly ungrateful. Morris, as his wont was when things were not going to his mind, began to walk about the room and fidget with the things lying on his study table. His visitor continued, undeterred by these warnings. Then Morris broke out. "Look here,——," he said, "you mustn't say that sort of thing in mixed company, you know, or you'll run a great chance of being taken for a fool."

For Burne-Jones his own admiration was undulled by their complete and lifelong fraternity, and untouched by any later divergence in social habit or doctrine.

Even in matters of art they did not see alike. Just as the restless energy of the one was in strong contrast to the other's patient scholarship and continuous absorption, so they received or re-incarnated the Middle Ages through the eyes and brain in the one case of a Norman, in the other of a Florentine. But these very differences only made them the more fully complementary to one another. Morris's deep feeling for Burne-Jones's work is expressed, though in studiously restrained language, in the Birmingham address of 1891 on the Pre-Raphaelite School. But it may be even better judged from a more casual utterance. Once at the Grange he was—perhaps for the hundredth time—pressing for more and yet more designs for woodcuts for the Kelmscott Press. "You would think," Sir Edward said, turning to me with his wonderful smile, "to listen to Top, that I was the only artist in the world." "Well," said Morris quietly, "perhaps you wouldn't be so far wrong."

With well-meaning persons who came to him for advice or information he had grown wonderfully tolerant. In reply to an earnest correspondent who had asked his views on the subject of temperance, he replied in a letter which deserves record for its exquisite interplay of demure humour and solid sense.

"Dear Sir," he wrote, "I think the question of the advantage of alcoholic liquors is a matter which each man must find out for himself, having admitted that one may easily drink too much even without getting drunk. My own experience is that I find my victuals dull without something to drink, and that tea and coffee are not fit liquors to be taken with food: in fact the latter always disagrees with me palpably, and probably tea isn't good for me. It is a remarkable fact that in Iceland toothache was almost unknown till the intro-

duction of tea and coffee: the latter drink the Icelanders are now much addicted to.

"If I were to say what I really think I should say that tobacco seems to me a more dangerous intoxicant than liquors, because people can and do smoke to excess without becoming beastly and a nuisance. I am sure that Oriental countries have suffered much from the introduction of tobacco. N.B.—I am a smoker myself. A great point would be to try to get the liquors free from adulteration. But that I fear is impossible under a capitalistic *régime*."

His patience even extended to others less worthy of it: to those who came to him with the more or less concealed intention of getting something to their own advantage out of him, or in order to instruct him on matters in which he had taught their teachers. When his activity in the Socialist movement brought round him a mass of more or less disreputable professing adherents, whose application of the principles of Socialism did not go much beyond the idea that Morris should share his money with them, he carried his indulgence to an extreme pitch. He told a friend of his once that a young man and woman, quite unknown, had called on him and asked him to give them a start, as they were going to be married. "Were they Socialists?" his friend asked. "I don't know," Morris answered; "I suppose so. I gave them five pounds to get rid of them, as I was busy."

The life of insults through which he had passed both before and after he became a Socialist had at last left him almost secure of his own temper. His friend, Mr. Newman Howard, has told me that once when they had been doing business together, he took Morris to his own club, which was a Conservative one. An acquaintance of Mr. Howard's, who did not know

Morris, sat down at the same table with them, and opened conversation with Morris by asking, "Well, what do you think of these strikes? I can tell you: it isn't so much the workmen: it's those damned Socialist leaders. They are infernal thieves and rascals, the whole lot of them." Bland and impenetrable, Morris only answered "Indeed," in such a quiet flat voice as made it impossible to continue the subject.

One result of that growing patience was to make him more indifferent to criticism. As much from a certain "childlike shamelessness" which has been noted by one of his most intimate friends as his deepest quality, as from his no less unique self-absorption in his own thoughts and feelings, external criticism had never much affected him. No doubt there must have been a certain loss in this carelessness to the effect which his work, and he himself, made on others. Criticism has its value in letting an artist, or a human being, see, more clearly than he could do of his own self, to what he and his work really amount for his fellow-artists and fellow-creatures: and the absence of sensitiveness in an artist to the effect produced by his work may imply even for the work itself a certain loss of sensitiveness and flexibility. With Morris one often felt that it would make little or no difference to him if no one else ever saw his designs or read his books. Certainly it made no difference to him whether they met with approval from the world, or even from other artists in other methods. He might have taken for his own an ancient Celtic saying: "God has made out of his abundance a separate wisdom for everything that lives, and to do these things is my wisdom."

To criticism of his writings, whether in prose or verse, he was particularly indifferent. In his poems and his prose romances alike, he had set before him-

self an object or an effect with perfect clearness: how far he had executed his own design, how far fallen short of it, he felt he knew better than any one could teach him; and that his design was not what this or that other person would have chosen, was not what the public liked or understood, was not, in a word, something else instead of being itself, were matters to him of infinite unconcern. The adverse criticisms encountered by his prose romances on the ground of their mannerisms of vocabulary and construction never induced him to modify the diction which he had chosen, and which was in truth natural to him in a much deeper way than modern newspaper English is natural to the ordinary educated writer. The common literary English of the present day Morris denounced as "a wretched mongrel jargon," corresponding in its own vices to the so-called modern architecture. His own prose style, so difficult to the average careless reader, he maintained to be far simpler and more natural. So indeed it essentially is, as may be seen by the sudden contrast, like a patch of bad colour in a tapestry, when from carelessness or weariness or the mere overwhelming force of surroundings, he has here and there allowed his style for a few lines together to slip into modernism. But he confessed mournfully that for working men (and he thought that working men had a natural intelligence at least equal to that of the middle classes) his writing was "too simple to be understood." The debased modern journalistic style, like the debased modern typography, had grown so familiar from universal use, that a reversion to older and purer types threw people out, and made them complain of a difficulty which they quite honestly felt.

"Verse has a privilege to be more old-fashioned than prose," observes one of the most scholarly and

accomplished of his critics in discussing "The Roots of the Mountains"; "but Mr. Morris's prose is more old-fashioned than his verse." This is true; it seems, however, to miss or ignore the fact which is essential to a sympathetic understanding of the whole of Morris's work, that in literature as well as in the manual arts he was throughout his life striving to take up and continue the dropped threads of the mediæval tradition; and that his work in both fields, while it was in one sense completely modern and even in advance of his age, was based on the return to and development of methods which had long since gone out of fashion, if they had not become completely obsolete. To go back to the fourteenth century, not with the view of staying there, but of advancing from it on what he conceived to be the true high road out of which the arts had long wandered, was his perpetual principle. But it so happens (whether from anything essential to the art or from particular causes to be sought in history) that the fashion of poetry has changed much less since Chaucer's time than the fashion of prose. The English version of the "Gesta Romanorum" (a work which Morris considered to be the perfection of English prose) is, though more recent in date, more old-fashioned than either Piers Plowman or the Canterbury Tales: or in Chaucer himself, the Tale of Melibœus, or the Treatise on the Astrolabe, is more old-fashioned than the Knight's Tale, or than the Book of Troilus and Cressida. It was some feeling of this sort, in combination with his inveterate love of paradox, that made Morris repeatedly startle his friends by casually alluding to Chaucer as "the great corrupter of the English language." For in matters of style and diction, Chaucer, as is proved by the fact that English poetry made no sensible advance

for a hundred and fifty years after him, was far in advance of his own day. Whether Morris's attempt to launch English prose style on this fresh pathway was successful is a different question, and one which perhaps few scholars would hesitate to answer in the negative. But his prose was as sincere, and as little a forced copy of mediæval work, as were his illuminated manuscripts, or his painted windows. This may be a reason, if reason has to be assigned, why none of the various parodies of his style bear much resemblance to the original.

For the refined products of modern ingenuity which did not root themselves back on that old tradition, he had as little taste in literature as in painting. The modern books which in later life he read with the greatest enjoyment were those which, without artifice or distinction of style, dealt with a life, whether actual or imaginary, which approached his ideal in its simplicity and its close relation to nature, especially among a race of people who remained face to face with the elementary facts of life, and had never become fully sophisticated by civilization. In this spirit, he admired and praised works like Mr. Doughty's "Arabia Deserta," or "Uncle Remus," from which he was always willing and eager to read aloud, or "Huck Finn," which he half-jestingly pronounced to be the greatest thing, whether in art or nature, that America had produced. For refinement of style, for subtle psychology in creation, he had but little taste. He could not admire either Meredith or Stevenson. When he was introduced to Ibsen's plays, and called on to join in admiring their union of accomplished dramatic craftsmanship with the most modern movement of ideas, they were dismissed by him in the terse and comprehensive criticism, "Very clever, I must

say." But neither did elaboration of style nor advanced modernism of treatment stand in the way of his appreciation when the substance of a book was to his liking; and among the books which in recent years he praised most highly were the masterpieces of Pierre Loti and Maurice Maeterlinck.

"Master of himself and therefore of all near him," Morris at the same time retained the most childlike simplicity in the expression of his actual thoughts or feelings on any subject, and was as little hampered by false shame as he was guided by convention. In some points he remained an absolute child to the end of his life. If you introduced him to a friend, and he had the faintest suspicion that he was there to be shown off, his manners instantly became intolerable. As childlike was another of his characteristics, the constant desire to be in actual touch with the things he loved. He became a member of the Society of Antiquaries for no other reason than that he might be part-owner of one of their mediæval painted books. The mere handling of a beautiful thing seemed to give him intense physical pleasure. "If you have got one of his books in your hands for a minute," Burne-Jones said of him, "he'll take it away from you as if you were hurting it, and show it you himself." He never in any case could conceal his hand in a matter of business: but when he was bargaining with Quaritch for an old book of which the possession meant more to him than the price, he would make the fact plain by carrying on the negotiation with the book tucked tightly under his arm, as if it might run away. The resemblance already glanced at between him and Samuel Johnson had grown stronger in these latter years: and it was as visible in his eager width of interest as in the contradictiousness and love of para-

dox in which he was perhaps excelled by Johnson alone. Both men had this spirit of contradiction constantly acting in curious combination with what was, if not fair-mindedness, at all events an unshaken and fundamental integrity of intellect. Like Johnson, Morris had a way of applying hard logic to matters in which most men are content to be guided by compromise or fashion. Both were acute and severe critics of what is called women's work, and were fastidious in their appreciation of women's dress and looks, yet were little affected by what women thought of them, and preferred men's to women's society. Morris allowed himself to be drawn freely by inquisitive acquaintances, and was ready to lay down the law on any conceivable topic; but any amateur Boswell was liable to be suddenly turned upon and tossed. His large tolerance for bores was united with a keen insight into their character: he would allow one of that class to make heavy drafts on his time, and purse, and patience, and only incidentally note him in a quiet, but scathing phrase, as "hen-headed," or "a sponge," or "a cripple whose smoking flax I have not conscientious boldness enough to quench." Like Johnson ("I am well-bred to a degree of needless scrupulosity" are the immortal words recorded by Mrs. Thrale), he "looked upon himself as a very polite man," prided himself on his manners, and was capable of the most amazing and almost supernatural rudeness towards both men and women. Many of Johnson's sayings sound most natural in Morris's familiar intonation, and accompanied by his tricks of gesture; and his own familiar talk was full of sentences which, were they inserted in Boswell, could hardly be distinguished from the true Johnsonian context.

But this likeness was crossed and shot by the vein

of high romance which coloured all he ever thought or did. In him this turn of mind had all the seriousness, though not the lack of balance, that is associated with the name of Quixotry. Seriousness was what lay deepest of all in him; and the comparison which clings most intimately, of all the many made, in sport or in earnest, by his friends, is one incidentally and lightly dropped, only a few months before his death, by one for whom familiarity had not dulled the edge of observation. The figure seen by him one evening, in the cloak and satchel, the soft hat pulled down over his eyes and the stick firmly grasped and held point forward as he walked straight on, seeming to see nothing of all that was round him—yet in fact seeing it and taking it all in with incomparable swiftness—through the glare and bustle of the Strand, was like one other person and one only, Christian passing through Vanity Fair.

That seriousness and simplicity of mind, even more than the less approachable and intelligible qualities of his lonely genius, was what held his friends to him with a strength of attachment that neither his own inner remoteness nor his swift turns from one interest to another could loosen. They often had a sense of being dragged at his heels, perplexed and out of breath; but they felt through it all that to his own eyes the way lay perfectly straight forward. "He led us all a dance," one of his closest friends said to me in speaking of one of those times when, without troubling himself to give much explanation, or to break his new departure gently to his panting followers, he swung rapidly round on a new front—"not for the first or last time: would he could lead us some more!" For as long as he lived those who knew him felt confident that he would be in the fullest sense, and at every

moment, alive: this or that interest might pass, one or another occupation be taken up or discarded, but the interest of living, the occupation of creating and working, would never lessen or falter.

To the same central quality, the seriousness and simplicity which walked, without noticing them, through all the hedges and over all the ditches of worldly convention, it was due that he was so conspicuously at his ease in the society of a class different from his own. Civility to inferiors was certainly not one of his strong points; and the aristocratic temper of his youth would show itself even in his latest years. But it was a temper rather than a principle; in a very real sense he treated his servants or workmen as he treated his social equals; and though he often, in the terse phrase of common usage, wiped his boots on a man, he never either showed or felt towards him the more stinging insolence of condescension. To working men he was like one of themselves, one who worked as they did and lived a quite intelligible life, but who was full of queer, and for the most part fantastic or unintelligible, ideas. Yet many letters received after his death show that working men held him in real honour, and felt a personal grief for the loss of one who had been on their side, who had meant well by them, who had brought to some degree a new meaning into their own life. Such tributes are apt to be paid in an artificial currency; but in these letters a sincere emotion struggles to express itself through the worn and ill-fitting phrases, the stock of cheap ready-made clothing for ideas which the industry and keen intelligence of commercial journalism, copying with a fatal instinct all that is worst in its models, produces wholesale for an ever widening market. In an ill-spelled and touching letter, the Walthamstow Branch of the

Navvies' and General Labourers' Union expressed their admiration for his "noble works and genuine counsel," "the seed that so noble a man sowed in his great and useful life." On behalf of a Lancashire Branch of the Social Democratic Federation their secretary wrote, "Comrade Morris is not dead there is not a Socialist living whould belive him dead for he Lives in the heart of all true men and women still and will do so to the end of time." In even simpler words one of the textile workers at Merton Abbey wrote to Mrs. Morris, "Dear Madam, I loved and honoured my Master, therefore I mourn with you, excuse this intrusion, I cannot help it. May God support and comfort you is the prayer of your faithful servant."

In the Northern Sagas, as in the heroic cycle of ancient Greece, a man's life is not fully ended till he has been laid under ground, and the accident of death has been followed by the sacred offices of burial. That reluctance to end the story, to part with its hero until the funeral pyre was out and the last valediction over, was an attitude of mind which Morris himself specially loved; and if we may believe that any sense of the last rites performed over them may touch the dead, he might find a last satisfaction in the simple and impressive ceremony of his funeral. He was buried in the little churchyard of Kelmscott on the 6th of October. The night had been wet, and morning lightened dully over soaking meadows, fading away in a blur of mist. As the day went on, the wind and rain both increased, and rose in the afternoon to a tempest. The storm, which raged with great violence over the whole country, with furious south-westerly gales, reached its greatest force in the upper Thames valley. The low-lying lands were flooded,

and all the little streams that are fed from the Cotswolds ran full and deep brown. The noise of waters was everywhere. Clumps of Michaelmas daisies were in flower in the drenched cottage gardens, and the thinning willows had turned, not to the brilliance of their common October colouring, but to a dull tarnished gold. The rooks were silent in the elms about the Manor House. Apples lay strewn on the grass in the orchard. In the garden, the yew dragon, untrimmed since his own hand had last clipped it, had sprouted out into bristles. A few pink roses and sweet peas still lingered among the chrysanthemums and dahlias of the autumnal plots.

One of the farm wagons, with a yellow body and bright red wheels, was prepared in the morning to carry the coffin from Lechlade station; it was drawn by a sleek roan mare and led by one of the Kelmscott carters. The wagon was wreathed with vine, and strewn with willow boughs over a carpeting of moss. In it the coffin, simple and even beautiful in its severe design, of unpolished oak with wrought iron handles, was placed on its arrival, and over it was laid a piece of Broussa brocade which had been long in Morris's possession, and a wreath of bay. The group of mourners followed it along the dripping lanes, between russet hedgerows and silver-grey slabbed stone fences, to the churchyard gate, and up the short lime-avenue to the tiny church. There the Rev. W. F. Adams, Vicar of Little Faringdon, Morris's schoolfellow at Marlborough, and the friend and neighbour of later years at Kelmscott, read the funeral service. With the family and friends were mingled workmen from Merton Abbey and Oxford Street, comrades of the Socialist League, pupils of the Art Workers' Guild, and Kelmscott villagers in their daily working dress.

There was no pomp of organized mourning, and the ceremony was of the shortest and simplest. Among associates and followers of later years were the few survivors of that remarkable fellowship which had founded the Oxford Brotherhood and the Firm of Red Lion Square; and at the head of the grave Sir Edward Burne-Jones, the closest and the first friend of all, stood and saw a great part of his own life lowered into earth. "What I should do, or how I should get on without him," he had once said when Morris's increasing weakness became alarming, "I don't in the least know. I should be like a man who has lost his back." *Si unus ceciderit, ab altero fulcietur: væ soli! quia cum ceciderit, non habet sublevantem se.*

As dusk fell, the storm swept more fiercely over Oxford. The driving rain found its way through the roof of the Union Library, and carried away patches of the faded painting with which, in the ardour of his first devotion to art, amid an unbroken band of kindred spirits, confident in youth, united in faith and friendship, he had adorned it thirty-nine years before. A new age had since then risen over a new England, and those early days were already receding into the dimness of an almost fabulous past.

Principes mortales, rem publicam æternam esse: proin repeterent sollennia: the cold and august words of the Roman Emperor may best express the feeling with which that funeral company dispersed to their homes. A great personality had ceased: yet the strongest feeling in the minds of the survivors was rather that it had returned to, than, in the customary phrase of common usage, passed away from earth. Among the men and women through whom he had so often moved as in a dream, isolated, self-centred, almost empty of love or hatred, he moved no more. It seemed natural that

he should go out from among them, not being really of them. "He doesn't want anybody," so his most intimate friend once said of him: "I suppose he would miss me for a bit, but it wouldn't change one day of his life, nor alter a plan in it. He lives absolutely without the need of man or woman. He is really a sort of Viking, set down here, and making art because there is nothing else to do." Far less easy to realize was his absence henceforward from the surroundings in which and through which he lived almost as in a bodily vesture: from his books and manuscripts, from his vats and looms, from the grey gabled house and the familiar fields, from the living earth which he loved with so continuous and absorbing a passion.

"It came to pass," says the ancient forgotten author of the Volsunga Saga, when he has to tell of the death of the father of King Volsung, "that he fell sick and got his death, being minded to go home to Odin, a thing much desired of many folk in those days." With no such desire had this last inheritor of the Viking spirit approached his end. To be, "though men call you dead, a part and parcel of the living wisdom of all things," still to live somewhere in the larger life of this and no other world, such had been his desire, such his faith and hope throughout the loneliness and fixedness in which he had passed his mortal days. He might seem, now the entanglement of life was snapped, to have resumed his place among the lucid ranks that, still sojourning yet still moving onward, enter their appointed rest and their native country unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

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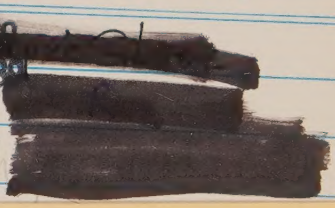

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